CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In Australian public schools[1] parents have the right for their children to receive instruction in the distinctive religious tenets and beliefs of the religion of their choice. This religious instruction is taught during school hours by representatives of authorised religious groups, and is managed at state and territory level by the relevant government education departments. It is known by a variety of names including Christian Religious Education, Religious Instruction, Scripture, or Special Religious Education; and in this study it will be called Special Religious Education (SRE). Although it is known by different names and is defined slightly differently in each State and Territory of Australia, the following definition from the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013, p. 3) is the definition used in this study:

> Special Religious Education is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion.

SRE is a single tradition approach to religious education that focuses on the distinctive religious tenets and beliefs of the religion being taught (Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc, 2002-2011). Representatives of authorised religious groups (called SRE Providers) teach students whose parents have nominated for them to attend a particular religion's SRE classes (NSW Department of Education and Training, 1999-2011). These SRE Providers include the Roman Catholic, Anglican and the Islamic Council of New South Wales, Appendix 1.1 lists all the SRE Providers that are authorised to teach SRE in New South Wales. SRE is taught during school hours at a time negotiated between the school and SRE teachers. However, as later chapters will show this can be a complex and contested process. In addition, in New South Wales, ethics classes are also provided as an option for children during timetabled SRE.

SRE is different to General Religious Education (GRE) that is also taught in Australian public schools and Religious Education (RE) that is taught in schools with

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[1] In Australia, public schools are schools that are fully funded by the state government. Although some of the documents cited in this chapter refer to public schools as state or government schools; public schools is the term used in this thesis.

a religious base. In GRE students learn about the world's major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives. It is part of their study of humanities and social science, and is taught by classroom teachers[2]. RE is part of the curriculum in religious schools. In RE, students learn about the beliefs and religious practices of their school. This may be taught from a faith perspective, and students may learn about other religions during RE. RE is also taught by classroom teachers who are members of the school staff. In contrast, SRE is taught from a position of faith by teachers who are not members of the school staff. It is important to note that while both RE and SRE are faith-based, SRE does not involve a call to faith[3]. Although SRE is "an integral part of school activities, taking place in school hours and under the jurisdiction of the school" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013, p. 4), the school is not responsible for the SRE curriculum or the training of SRE teachers.

SRE is provided in all states of Australia. However, each state has slight variations on the provision of SRE. For example, although SRE classes are not compulsory in any state or territory of Australia, in New South Wales, South Australia, the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, parents have the right to request religious instruction for their children (that is, they must opt in to SRE), while parents in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia have the right to excuse their children from SRE (that is, they must opt out of SRE). These variations are summarised in Appendix 1.2. Regardless of whether it is "opt-in" or "opt-out", the non-compulsory nature of SRE sets it apart from other subjects taught during school hours because it means that students (with their parents' permission) can choose at any time in the school year not to attend, or to join in, SRE classes.

The majority of SRE teachers are volunteers with no professional teacher training who rely on published curriculum resources from the SRE Providers. It is difficult to obtain exact figures on the numbers of SRE teachers currently teaching in the states of New South Wales and Victoria[4] where the SRE teachers in this study

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[2] I use the term "classroom teacher" to describe the professional teacher who teaches in the classroom where SRE takes place, and to differentiate from the "SRE teacher".

[3] The notion of SRE not being a place to call students to faith is discussed further in later sections of this chapter.

[4] This study focuses on SRE in two of the states and territories of Australia, the justification for this can be found later in the chapter.

were drawn from. This is particularly the case in New South Wales where there are over twenty five Christian SRE providers for example, the Christian Brethren Assemblies, Presbyterian Church and Serbian Orthodox Church. The Anglican Church in Sydney, one of the larger providers of SRE in New South Wales, has 2571 SRE teachers teaching in New South Wales public schools (Jon Thorpe, Executive Director of Ministry Support, Youthworks, personal communication, 25 June, 2014). In 2009 in Victoria, where there is one authorised provider for Christian SRE, there were 3200 Christian SRE teachers and 3000 of them have no formal teaching qualifications (Denise Nicholls, Director of Christian Education, Access Ministries, personal communication, 9 September, 2009). If faith in God is what brings the SRE teachers into public schools, it is the historical, legislative and social context in which they teach that conditions and shapes so much of what they do. It is therefore helpful to initiate a study of SRE pedagogy by exploring these contexts and their influence on SRE teaching.

1.1 The historical context

The historical context of SRE is important, because what SRE is like in the twenty first century is to some degree shaped by its past. The genesis of the distinctive nature of SRE can be found in classroom religious education in the first Australian colonial schools. While New South Wales and Victoria approached SRE differently between 1850 and 1950, by the 1950s school students in New South Wales and Victoria had access to SRE lessons that were taught within school hours by visiting SRE teachers. In the present day, school students continue to have access to SRE, although there is a much broader range of religious groups providing SRE and a group of students who opt out of SRE and attend "non-SRE"[5]. In addition, in New South Wales, students are afforded the opportunity to attend secular ethics classes during the period timetabled for SRE. The following is a brief overview of five stages in the history of SRE in New South Wales and Victoria that lay the contextual foundation for understanding SRE pedagogy

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[5] Schools are to provide meaningful activities with appropriate care and supervision for students in "non-SRE". Suitable activities include reading, private study and completing homework. (New South Wales Deparment of Education and Communities, 2013)

1.1.1 Stage 1: Colonial New South Wales - church responsible for education (1780-1830)

In the first schools in the New South Wales[6] colony, religion and education were close partners (Rawlinson 1980). This was because the church saw establishing schools as part of its "traditional social responsibility" (Meyer, 2000, p. 304). This was largely based on the belief that educating the poor in "the principles of religion, and habits of industry [would]… lay the foundation of their future happiness and prosperity" (Burton, 1840, p. 91), Although there were a range of Christian denominations represented in the early colony, the Church of England was understood to be the Established Church (Wilkinson, Caldwell, Selleck, Harris, & Dettman, 2006) and as such, it represented the official religion of New South Wales. It was overseen by Church of England clergymen who were responsible for ministering to the convicts, military garrison and free settlers; keeping watch on public morality; conducting church services; and overseeing the appointed school masters (Judd & Cable, 2000).

These first schools were "essentially government schools" (Lawry, 1965, p. 166) that were overseen by the colonial chaplain and partially financed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel. The schools provided lessons in "religion, morality, reading, writing and arithmetic" (Lawry, 1965, p. 167) and therefore the need for SRE as a separate entity would have been unnecessary. The beliefs and tenets of the Established Church would have constituted the subject matter of the religious education, and all students would have participated in it; as Rev. Samuel Marsden commented: "Roman Catholics, Jews, and persons of all persuasions, send their children to the public schools, where they are all instructed in the principles of *our* established religion" (in Lawry, 1965, p. 170, my italics). At the beginning of European settlement, it is therefore not an exaggeration to say that the church and education were synonymous.

Until the 1830s the close relationship between the church and education continued to influence the place of religious education in schools. In 1820, Governor Macquarie was advised by the Colonial Secretary, Earl Bathurst, that schools would be established on the model of Dr Bell's National schools in England (Wilkinson et

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[6] In the beginning of European settlement, Australia was divided into two halves. New South Wales, the eastern half, included the area that is now the states of Victoria, Queensland and South Australia. Victoria became a separate colony in 1851, and Queensland became a separate colony in 1859.

al., 2006). In Bell's National school system "part of each day was spent in learning about the Catechism of the Church of England" (Bubacz, 2008, p. 138). Reverend Rendell was sent to New South Wales to introduce the system and supervise the new schools (Wilkinson et al., 2006), and the Church and School Corporation was formed in 1826. All schools established by the Corporation were Church of England schools under the control of the clergyman of the local parish (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010).

In these early schools in Australia, all students were expected to participate in the religious component of their education. There was therefore no need for SRE because RE was an integral part of education. However, because religious education was an important part of public education at its inception, this provided a foundation for the future possibility of SRE.

1.1.2 Stage 2: National schools - providing religious instruction for Catholic and Protestant[7] students (1830-1850)

In the following years, the Church of England lost its position as the Established Church in the colony[8]. This, coupled with the perceived unfair treatment of religious denominations other than the Church of England (Wilkinson et al., 2006) led to the Church and School Corporation being dissolved in 1833. As a result, the responsibility for education moved from the Church of England to the state and a new plan for education was needed. Sir Richard Bourke, an Irishman who became the New South Wales Governor in 1831, proposed a model of education similar to the Irish Education Experiment. This proposal was motivated by Bourke's desire to avoid sectarianism and provide education for all children. In the Irish Education Experiment, the British administration in Ireland had established a state supported primary school system where both Catholic and Protestant children were welcome (Lynch, Crean, & Lyons, 2009).

Following this model, New South Wales schools were to have daily bible readings organised by classroom teachers, and weekly visits by clergy to give

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[7] Protestant is a term commonly used to describe a follower of any of the Western Christian Churches that separated from the Roman Catholic Church at the Reformation, or a church descended from them. Strictly speaking, the Anglican Church is not a Protestant Church. However, in SRE the term tends to encompass Protestant and Anglican Churches and this is how it is used in this thesis.

[8] This was formalised in 1836 when the Church Act of 1836 was passed. The Act acknowledged the place of churches other than the Church of England in the colony

religious instruction to students from their particular denominations (King, 1966). In 1835, Lord Glenelg wrote to Sir Richard Bourke about the National schools (in Burton, 1840, p. 84) stating that all students would receive "daily and ordinary instruction of this nature to the leading doctrines of Christianity, and those practical duties, on which I hope all Christians cordially agree". He went on to emphasise that the tenets of a particular denomination should "be afforded, at stated periods, for the imparting of instruction of this nature to the children of different persuasions, by their respective pastors". It is important to note that this was seen as an antidote to sectarianism, and only Roman Catholic and Protestant options were anticipated. There is also no indication that students could choose not to attend the denominational classes, although some Catholics removed their children from the Bible reading (Fogarty, 1959). However, it does represent the first time in the colony that students of different denominational backgrounds could receive specific religious education by visiting clergy.

Bourke's "educational plan produced more argument than action" (Rawlinson 1980, 2.4) because he did not advocate closing the existing church schools. In addition, the Anglican Bishop William Broughton opposed the plan because he believed it favoured the Roman Catholics (Wilkinson et al., 2006). As a result, a dual system of schooling was established where church schools were subsidised through a Denominational School Board, and a system of National schools based on the Irish model were governed by the Board of Commissioners for National Education. Under this dual system, the Church and State shared responsibility for education.

In 1848, five years after Bourke left the colony, the first of the National schools, Fort Street School in Sydney, was established (Langdon, 1986). By June 1851, there were thirty seven National schools with over two thousand students attending them. Six of these schools were handed over to the Victorian government when Victoria and New South Wales separated in July 1851 (NSW Department of Education and Training, 2010). All of these schools provided both general Christian instruction and specific denominational religious instruction. The 1856 Commission of Inquiry sheds some light on religious education pedagogy of the time, describing religious education in these schools as deplorable and going on to say that

> … the catechisms are learned by rote, and no care appears to be taken to enable the children to comprehend the meaning… when committed to memory without explanation on the part of the teacher, and without being understood by the pupil, we can but regard them as absolute impediments to the acquisition of knowledge, and the progress of education.
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> (in Fogarty, 1959, p. 116)

The historical stage is significant because it illustrates that a form of SRE has existed from the outset of public education in Australia. Although educational responsibility moved from the church to the state during this period, religious instruction was still an integral part of daily school life. In addition, as a precursor to contemporary SRE, students of different denominations could be given religious education by visiting clergy. However, as noted in the 1856 Commission of Inquiry, RE pedagogy with its emphasis on rote learning of the catechism[9] would be greatly different to contemporary SRE pedagogy.

1.1.3 Stage 3: Differing approaches to SRE in New South Wales and Victoria (1850 – 1890)

The next stage in the history of SRE begins with the division of New South Wales and Victoria into two colonies in 1851. At this point, two different approaches to school religious education begin to emerge. In New South Wales, SRE continued on its trajectory as a particular expression of religious education that was entrenched in legislation. In contrast over that period in Victoria, all religious education was removed from the public education system and students could only participate in SRE outside of school hours.

In New South Wales as a result of the 1866 Public Schools Act, the Denominational and National Boards were replaced with the Council of Public Education (Wilkinson et al., 2006). The Council of Public Education took control of all schools receiving government funding including National schools (now called Public schools) and Denominational schools. However, the Act continued to allow for the provision of religious instruction by visiting clergy for an hour each day. The Catholic Church's response to the Act was to establish its own schools (Wilkinson et al., 2006) because it objected to education being controlled by secular authorities (Goldburg, 2008). In contrast to the Roman Catholic Church's response, in 1879 the

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[9] A catechism is summary of the principles of Christian religion in the form of questions and answers.

Anglican Diocese of Sydney appointed a Committee for Special Religious Instruction in Public Schools to take advantage of the provision for religious instruction (Langdon, 1992).

The place of SRE in New South Wales public schools was further strengthened by the New South Wales Public Instruction Act of 1880 which both removed state aid to Denominational schools[10] and emphasised that teaching in all government funded schools would be strictly non-sectarian. This did not mean there would be no religious education as evident in the Act that decreed each day children would spend four hours in secular education. Rather than denying the place of religion in education, this emphasis confirmed that religious education should not be affiliated or restricted to a particular religious group. To cater for the needs of students of different religious groups, an additional part of each day, "not more than one hour, [was] set apart when the children of any one religious persuasion may be instructed by the clergyman or other religious teacher" (ACT Parliamentary Counsel's Office, 2002 section 17). The 1880 Act also gave parents the right to remove their children from religious education, and emphasised that students receiving religious instruction should be separated from other students.

These three amendments to the 1880 New South Wales Act capture some of the contextual factors that shape a distinctive SRE pedagogy, especially when compared to classroom pedagogy. Firstly, by allowing religious teachers as well as clergy into the schools, a system was set up where visiting teachers were permitted entry into public schools. Although they were provided with a classroom and students, they were not accountable to the school; rather, these peripatetic teachers were accountable to the religious group they represented. For example, they received different (or no) training to the classroom teachers and they taught content that was outside the control of the public system. Secondly, both by allowing parents to remove their children from religious education and separating participating students from other students during lessons, the difference between religious education and other lessons was accentuated. Religious education by a particular religious group

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[10] Section 7 of the 1880 Public Education Act also states that 'the words 'secular instruction' shall be held to include general religious teaching as distinguished from dogmatical or polemical theology', It is important to note that the term secular instruction was defined as non-sectarian, not non-religious (Rice 2006).

became an optional extra rather than a core subject within the school curriculum. These visiting teachers needed to keep their students engaged and interested so that their students would continue to attend the lessons. These amendments to the provision of religious education paved the way for a distinctive SRE pedagogy in the contemporary setting.

In contrast, in Victoria the place of religious education public schools soon took a different course. Initially, the dual system of denominational and national education where both the Church and State shared responsibility for education also continued in Victoria, and as a result religious education was kept as part of the school curriculum. In his *Report of the Inspector of Denominational schools, upon the National System of Education* (1851), Childers, the Inspector of Schools for the Denominational Board of Victoria, described how religious instruction is given during school hours by means of four volumes of Scriptural lessons, consisting of extracts from the Bible. He went on to explain that although no dogmatic teaching was permitted, "ministers of every church are allowed access to the children of their own denomination at stated times". A year later Childers stated in his *Council paper on National Education* (1852) that "opportunities and facilities are to be afforded to the children of each school for receiving such religious instruction as their parents or guardians approve of." In a similar way to New South Wales, the SRE model of religious education was taking shape where representatives of approved religious bodies were invited into schools to give religious instruction.

However, twenty years later, the Victorian government had taken full responsibility for public school education. The 1872 Victorian Education Act stated that public education in Victoria was to be free, compulsory and secular (David, 1908), and removed all religious education from public school timetable (The Council for Christian Education in Schools, 1990). The strongly secular nature of the Act can at least be partially attributed to sectarianism between churches that resulted in their inability to reach consensus about the form that religious education in public schools should take (Paisley, 1990; Wilkinson et al., 2006).

Campbell (1896) points out that the term "secular" greatly depends on its definition. Whereas in New South Wales, secular was understood to mean non-sectarian (Rice, 2006) and not excluding religious influences, in Victoria it was

interpreted to mean opposed to religion (Campbell 1896) and defined as excluding anything religious (Paisley, 1990). As such, the 1872 Victorian Education Act cut off all grants to church schools and even erased all mention of religion in their public school textbooks[11] (David, 1908). While most of the colonies allowed their teachers to give general religious education, and visiting clergy denominational teaching, Victoria did not (Paisley, 1990). However, the Act did allow for religious education to be given in Victorian public schools after school hours. Similar to the Roman Catholic Church in New South Wales, in Victoria the Roman Catholic Church decided to establish its own educational system to ensure that their children were kept from a purely secular form of education (Meyer, 2000).

In the eighteen years following the Victorian Education Act there were "spasmodic, local and uncoordinated" (The Council for Christian Education in Schools, 1990, p. 7) efforts at providing after school religious instruction for Protestant children in public schools. It became obvious that the Education Act would only be changed if the churches worked together as a "unified pressure group" (Paisley, 1990, p. 19) and in 1890 the (Protestant) Ecumenical Geelong Association for Giving Religious Education in State Schools (Paisley, 1990) was formed. The Association was important because it developed lessons for after school religious instruction that could be used both by clergy and lay volunteers. As such, while SRE was only allowed outside of school hours, it was the beginning of Victorian SRE in its contemporary form. Importantly, with the churches now working together to provide religious instruction to public school students, sectarian animosity that had significantly contributed to the secularism of the 1872 Victorian Education Act was reversed. With the breakdown of secularism created by the cooperation of the Protestant churches, ecumenical lessons for all Protestant students could be prepared. This Protestant ecumenical approach to SRE contrasts to the beginning of SRE in New South Wales where each denomination taught religious education separately.

1.1.4 Stage 4: Churches take responsibility for SRE (1890 – 1970)

SRE's place in public schools and the churches' responsibility for SRE was firmly cemented during this long period in the history of SRE. While SRE continued

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[11] This secular education was taken to such an extreme that all references to God and Christianity were even removed from literary textbooks. Paisley (1990) cites the example of Portia's speech in *The Merchant of Venice* being deleted because in it mercy was described as an attribute of God.

to be taught during school hours in New South Wales, it was in the 1950s that legislation in Victoria allowed for the provision of SRE during schools hours. In addition, by the late 1950s the Roman Catholic Church was also involved in SRE.

However, although there was no SRE during school hours in Victoria, this does not mean the church was silent. In 1896 the Presbyterian Elders Association was formed to coordinate after school religious instruction in Melbourne public schools. Contrary to its name, the Association had members from additional Protestant denominations. Initially, thirty volunteers taught religious instruction to twelve hundred students in four South Melbourne public schools (The Council for Christian Education in Schools, 1990). By 1900 there were two hundred and eleven volunteers teaching religious instruction in Victoria (Paisley, 1990). In 1904, in a significant move for SRE, the government allowed students to be taught in the thirty minutes before the official start of the school day (Paisley, 1990). This allowance increased the number of students receiving religious instruction and by 1908 approximately one quarter of Victorian students had some contact with religious instruction (Paisley, 1990). This also increased the need for volunteer instructors and a greater level of coordination. The task became too big for the Presbyterian Elders Association and the Joint Council of Religious Instruction in Day Schools was formed in 1920 (The Council for Christian Education in Schools, 1990).

During this period the number of SRE teachers also increased in New South Wales. Initially, in the late decade of the nineteenth century, the number of SRE teachers was small. For example, in addition to the Church of England clergy there was only twelve local and itinerant staff taking advantage of the opportunity to provide Church of England SRE in New South Wales public schools. Ten thousand Church of England children were taught in 187 weekly classes (Langdon, 1992) in New South Wales public schools. It is unclear what was being taught in these large classes with an average of fifty three students, but as early as 1880 Canon Goodman (in Paisley, 1990, p. 11) noted that clergy who were going into schools to teach students may have been

> … well-meaning and well versed in the scriptures, [but] knew little or nothing about teaching children. It was one thing to deliver a sermon from a pulpit to a docile church congregation or to lecture theological students; it was quite

another to deal with a crowd of children longing for freedom after a school day had officially finished and their heathen mates were skylarking outside.

Similarly, Langdon (1946, p. 9) also notes in his *Survey of Religious Instruction in the State Schools of NSW,* that students

> … were in no mood to listen to the uninterestingly presented and badly taught Scripture lessons which in many cases they received… due apparently to the fact that, until quite recently, the denominational authorities did not realise that, in order to be effective, school teaching of any kind needs special training and ability.

Perhaps because of the cooperation between the Protestant churches in Victoria, special religious education teaching resources were produced approximately thirty years earlier than in New South Wales by the Joint Council, a group represented by seven Protestant churches, the Presbyterian Elders Association and the Student Christian Movement (Paisley, 1990). It was the first state-wide organisation for religious instruction in Victoria and opened up the possibility of providing instruction for all public school children in Victoria (The Council for Christian Education in Schools, 1990). Its objectives were to arrange and supervise public school religious instruction, prepare graded lessons for religious education, and improve the access to schools for instructors. In 1943, the Joint Council was renamed the Council for Christian Education in Schools and in 1948 the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne supported the Agreed Syllabus (Paisley, 1990) and joined the Council for Christian Education in Schools[12].

Finally in an important moment in the history of SRE in Victoria, the 1950 Victorian Education Bill allowed for the amendment of the secular nature of the 1872 Education Act (Newell, 1968). Consequently, for the first time in Victoria, religious education could be taught in public schools during school hours as long as an agreed syllabus was used (Paisley, 1990). The Act paved the way for SRE (which was known as Christian Religious Education or CRE) in Victorian public schools, and led to a unified SRE that is not divided between Protestant and Roman Catholic churches[13]. Similar to the New South Wales Act, Section 21 of the 1950 Education [Religious Instruction] Act stated that SRE must be taught by accredited teachers representing

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[12] In 2007, the CCES changed its name to ACCESS Ministries.

[13] Although in the majority of cases, Roman Catholic and Protestant churches work together in Victoria, there is provision for separate Roman Catholic SRE to be taught.

the religion being taught; during the school timetable; and participation in the lessons would not be compulsory. (Victorian Act of Parliament in Newell, 1968). Subsequent Education Acts have confirmed the place of SRE in Victorian public schools. The place of SRE in Victorian public schools was further strengthened in the 2006 Education and Training Reform Act. While making it clear that public school education must be secular, the act also provides schools with the option to offer SRE that is "provided by churches and other religious groups and based on distinctive religious tenets and beliefs". This instruction is not compulsory and parents may request that their child does not attend such classes ("Education and Training Reform Act," 2006).

It is also at this point that the Roman Catholic Church started to formally participate in SRE. As has already been stated, the withdrawal of funding to Denominational schools led to the development of a separate system of schools by the Roman Catholic Church (Maple, 2007) because the church objected to "education being controlled by secular authorities" (Goldburg, 2008, p. 242). Catholic parents were warned of the spiritual dangers of sending their children to the public schools that were described by their bishops as "godless and full of protestant bias"(C. Campbell, 2007, p. 19). They were told that they must send their children to Catholic Schools unless they received a special dispensation from the parish priest (Potts, 1999). In addition, parish priests were not allowed to "take advantage of the period allocated to visiting clergy" (Cotter, Simms, & Petheridge, 2009). However, although this was the official policy, some lay leaders in the Roman Catholic Church chose to ignore this ruling and provided SRE to Catholic students in public schools during this time (Alison Newell, Diocesan CCD Coordinator, Catholic Diocese of Broken Bay, personal communication, 3 November, 2010).

In the late 1950s the Roman Catholic Church's position on SRE changed. For example, in 1958, with 18,000 Catholic children in public schools in the Catholic Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle, Cardinal Gilroy yielded to pressure and reversed the policy prohibiting religious education for Catholic students in public schools (Cotter et al., 2009). As a result, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine[14] (CCD) was revived

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[14] The Confraternity of Christian Doctrine CCD) is a Roman Catholic association established in 1562 for the purpose of giving religious instruction. The Broken Bay CCD "exists to bring the message of

in this diocese in 1960 to help Catholic parishes look after the Catholic students attending public schools (Cotter et al., 2009) by providing religious instruction during timetabled SRE. Similarly, in 1959, in response to the needs of Catholic children in the Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney who attended public schools, the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine was set up in the Sydney Archdiocese to organise and train catechists to provide religious instruction to these students. An appeal was made for volunteer teachers and six hundred untrained men and women responded to the call (Thompson, n.d.).

As has already been noted, the development of teaching resources occurred later in New South Wales than in Victoria. In 1947 the New South Wales Council for Christian Education in Schools (CCES) was founded to support Special Religious Education. The CCES produced a Scripture Work Book and provided training courses for clergy and others. In 1958 the Church of England Board of Education produced the *Trowel* curriculum for use in SRE classes. It described itself as "A self-contained syllabus of Bible teaching relevant to life experience and graded to match development learning skills and needs" (Christian Education Centre, 1958, p. 4). It included lessons from the Old and New Testaments, prayer, worship, the modern missionary movement, Easter and Christmas. *Trowel* presented a pedagogical methodology for teaching SRE that included providing for consolidation of teaching, evaluation of learning, study aids, individual expression work, study helps, Bible craft sheets, follow-up learning, memory work, and Bible readings. By providing both a syllabus and training for SRE teachers, some aspects of pedagogy were now formally controlled by a central organisation. This external guidance for SRE teachers in both what to teach and how to teach is a significant moment in the developing distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy.

It is important to note that several of the SRE Providers continue to publish teaching resources that are used by SRE teachers in their lessons in the present day. Christian Education Publications (Sydney Anglican Diocese) produces *Beginning with God* and *Connect;* the Baptist Churches of NSW and ACT produces *Godspace;* ACCESS Ministries produces *Launch, Trek, Search* and *Quest;* and the Broken Bay

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God's kingdom through effective evangelisation by delivering quality Religious Education to Catholic students in State Government schools" (Thompson, n.d.).

Diocese Confraternity of Christian Doctrine produces *Christ our Light* and *Life and Walking with Jesus: Pathways for Discipleship* (ICCOREIS, 2010). A summary of the teaching resources use by SRE teachers participating in this study can be found in Appendix 1.3. Each of these teaching resources has been designed to support Christian SRE teachers in the classroom. They provide a Teacher Book and corresponding Student Workbook for each level of school from Kindergarten/Prep to year six. The Teacher Book provides all the information that an SRE teacher needs to teach a lesson and the Student Workbook provides activities that complement the lesson. The Teacher Books are written in a highly prescriptive manner, they act as a "teaching script" that tells the teacher how to teach the lesson. The Student Books provide pen-and-paper activities that complement the lesson prescribed in the Teacher Book. Due to their prescriptive manner, the teaching resources used by SRE teachers also impact their pedagogical choices in the classroom.

The development of graded lessons for religious education is important for understanding SRE pedagogy. The historical antecedents of SRE have led to a schooling paradigm for religious education. That is, SRE was always taught as if it was a school subject, within the constraints and expectations of classroom pedagogy. Although students in Victoria attended SRE before or after school, it is likely that it was also taught using the classroom approaches of the day.

Another important change was occurring in New South Wales during these years because some of the Protestant denominations in New South Wales such as the Methodist and Presbyterian churches started to favour non-denominational SRE where all Protestant students were taught together. This represents a significant moment in the history of SRE as it changed the original essence of SRE where students received teaching that was particular to their denominational affiliation. It is possible that at this time, students attending SRE were no longer understood to belong to a particular denomination and perhaps not even to a religion at all. While the original purpose of SRE was to teach the specific tenets and beliefs of a family's denomination, this new era heralded the beginning of a time when it was possible that students attending SRE would have no family experience of faith practices. There may be significant implications for how SRE teachers approach their students, and therefore for their pedagogy.

This stage identifies three important factors in the developing distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy. Firstly, the three amendments to the New South Wales Public Instruction Act of 1880 that helped to create a SRE pedagogy that is separate to classroom pedagogy both by allowing outside teachers into the schools and allowing parents to remove their children from religious education. Secondly, the development of training and curriculum by SRE Providers could influence the SRE teachers' pedagogy. Thirdly, the presence of a sense of vocation or calling from the SRE teachers that is exemplified in the decision by Roman Catholic lay leaders to teach SRE regardless of the official Roman Catholic policy on SRE. This calling is also evident in the six hundred Roman Catholic volunteers who responded to the need for SRE teachers as well as the Protestant teachers who chose to teacher SRE.

1.1.5   Stage 5: Challenges to SRE (1970 to the present)

Due to the changing nature of religious belief in Australian society the challenge to SRE's assured place in New South Wales and Victorian public schools became more evident during the 1970s. As a result it has become increasingly important for churches to work together in the provision of SRE. For example, in New South Wales the Inter-Church Consultative Commission of Religious Instruction in Schools (ICCOREIS) was formed in in 1972. ICCOREIS was comprised of representatives from the Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox and Lutheran Churches and members of the New South Wales Council for Christian Education in Schools. Its four purposes were to (i) provide a fully representative context for inter-church discussion on religious education in public schools; (ii) formulate policy for endorsement by member churches and help facilitate the implementation of agreed policy; (iii) represent member churches in negotiations with the New South Wales Government and the Department of Education and Training; and (iv) negotiate and maintain liaison with relevant groups and other organisations (Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc, 2002-2011, pp. 1-2).

The formation of ICCOREIS was an important event in an emerging SRE pedagogy. The cooperation between churches allowed for a united approach to working with the New South Wales Government. As has already been noted in the previous section, by 1947 the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches already favoured a Protestant, rather than denominational approach to SRE, and ICCOREIS continued to pave the way for combined Protestant SRE where teachers from a broader range of

Christian denominations could work together to provide SRE. The need for an organisation like ICCOREIS for representing churches in negotiations with the New South Wales Government also hints at an awareness of the changing place of SRE in public schools.

Concern about the value and relevance of religious education in public schools gained momentum during the 1970s (Buchanan, 2007). In New South Wales a committee of enquiry was set up in 1975 to consider the place of religion in education in New South Wales public schools, the background and consequences of the Public Instruction Act, the position of religion in education in public schools, and recommendations for future action (Inter-Church Commission on Religious Education in Schools (NSW) Inc, 2002-2011). The result was the *Religion in Education in NSW Government Schools* Report, often referred to as *The Rawlinson Report* (Rawlinson, 1980). The report concluded that religion is a valid perspective to include in public education, always allowing for the parental right of withdrawal. It defined SRE as

> Education in the distinctive religious tenets and beliefs of the home and family, provided by the churches and other religious groups of children of parents expressing the desire that they receive such teaching.

(Rawlinson, 1980 , 6.57)

Similarly, in Victoria, the *Russell Committee on the Future of Religious Education in Victorian Schools* was established. The Committee concluded that religious education should complement the nurture provided in children's homes, churches and other religious groups without promoting any particular religious faith (W. Russell, 1974). Unlike the *Rawlinson Report* in New South Wales that recognised SRE as "an integral part of the schools' activities, which takes place in school hours under the jurisdiction of the school" (Rawlinson, 1980, p. 110), the Russell Report advocated a "pluralist, existential religious education" (Kumnick, 1982, p. 68) to replace SRE and be taught by classroom teachers. However, as a result of the backlash from churches, unwilling public school teachers (Kumnick, 1982) and strong protests from rural areas, the Victorian Minister for Education announced that the rights of religious groups to visit public schools would not be denied. This cemented the role of volunteer teachers in SRE lessons.

The Rawlinson Report made several recommendations that were important to SRE providers, SRE teachers and SRE students. While affirming the place of SRE in New South Wales public schools, the report makes it clear that the "what" and "how" of SRE teaching is in the hands of the religious groups providing SRE. It acknowledged that the state should have no say in the doctrine taught in SRE and that their own SRE teachers. In addition, the Rawlinson Report stressed that no religious group should see its role as proselytism. That is, teachers cannot call for children to convert to the religion that they are instructing them in. The report also recommended that parents could choose for their child to participate in an SRE program conducted by a religious group other than that of the family faith. Theoretically, opting out is for those who do not want their children to receive religious education. However, children who are bored, or who want to be with their friends in a different class can also ask their parents to opt them out of SRE.

New South Wales and Victorian Education Acts acknowledge that not all parents want their children to participate in SRE. Non-participating children are supervised by classroom teachers during SRE lessons. With changes in the religious beliefs of Australians, for example, in the 1911 Australian census 95% of Australians reported that they were Christian and 0.4% reported they had no religion; but by the 2011 census, this number had dramatically changed with 61% of respondents reporting that they were Christian, 22% reported having no religion, 2.5% were Buddhist, 2.2% were Muslim and 1.3% were Hindu. (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013); the number of students participating in SRE has significantly decreased (T. Russell, 2009). In response to this, both the St James Ethics Centre in New South Wales and the Humanist Society of Victoria have advocated the use of secular, ethics-based courses to be used as an alternative to SRE. Although there was significant resistance from Christian, Jewish, Buddhist and Muslim organisations (Cowling, 2011) in early 2010, an ethics-based complement to SRE was trialled in ten New South Wales public schools. These ethics classes are defined by the New South Wales Department of Education and Communities (2011) as "education in ethical decision making, action and reflection within a secular framework, based on a branch of philosophy". By November of the same year, against a backdrop of disagreement from SRE Providers, the New South Wales Government approved the use of ethics lessons during the SRE allocated time in public schools. In 2011, ethics classes for

years 5 and 6 students were offered in any school during SRE where volunteer teachers were available. The classes are now available to students in other years as more volunteer teachers become available and more teaching materials are written. In Victoria, the Humanist Society continues their strong attack against SRE (Humanist Society of Victoria, 2011). In March 2011, it launched a discrimination case against the Victorian Education Department in March 2011 "arguing that children who opt out of religious instruction are being unfairly disadvantaged" (Bachelard, 2011). Even so, SRE continues to play a role in Victorian public education.

The historical context of SRE in both New South Wales and Victoria helps to explicate the distinctive nature of SRE pedagogy that will be further explored in this study. It is clear that the place of the church and its role in education has changed significantly since European colonisation of Australia. SRE has moved from representing the mainstream religious discourse to the margins, and in this move has lost its place of dominance in Australian public schools as Australian society has become more secular. Initially, Australian public schools were run by the churches and religious education was an integral component of the curriculum. From the very outset of New South Wales public schooling, in addition to general Christian education, clergy were invited into schools to provide instruction in the tenets and beliefs of their particular denomination. In the early Australian colony any clergyman who visited a public school would have represented the opinions of those who were in power. However, SRE teachers now enter public schools as guests whose religious ideas do not necessarily represent the dominant discourse of Australian society and where not all students will participate in SRE. In recent years this has led to a great deal of discussion and agitation regarding the place of SRE in schools, in particular what to do with the children who do not attend any SRE lessons. In addition, in an increasingly secular society, they SRE teachers can no longer assume that the subject they teach will be being taught at home.

In sum, there are a number of issues arising from the context of SRE that influence the distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy when compared to classroom pedagogy. These include the fact that responsibility for resourcing, training and supporting SRE teachers is outside of the jurisdiction of the public school; the prescriptive nature of the teaching resources used in SRE that is discussed in Chapter

Seven; the calling of the SRE teachers that is briefly noted in the history of SRE and the parents' right to remove or enrol their children in SRE at any time in the school year that are both discussed more fully in Chapter Six; and the relationship of SRE teachers to the public schools that is discussed in Chapter Five. In addition, unlike classroom teachers who are assured of their students' presence in all subjects, SRE teachers can lose or gain students at any time. This may impact their pedagogy as they strive to keep their students engaged and interested in their lessons or risk losing them to SRE alternatives. Because parents can also choose to send their children to any SRE classes, there is also the chance that SRE teachers will be teaching students whose families do not share the tenets and beliefs that they are teaching. That is, students who have no family background in a particular religion may be taught that religion during SRE, if their parents elect for them to do so. This may influence the way that SRE teachers prepare and deliver their lessons. Each of these issues may affect the SRE teachers' pedagogy and this study provides the opportunity to hear how their beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy.

1.2   Purpose and research question

The purpose of this study is to explore SRE pedagogy. An exploration of SRE pedagogy presupposes a pedagogy that is particular to SRE; that is somehow different not only to classroom pedagogy but also to RE pedagogy. This difference lies in three different arenas: the context, the subject and the teacher. Firstly, as the previous section makes clear, there is a particular context in which SRE takes place. Although SRE is under the jurisdiction of the public school, SRE is different to other teaching. The SRE teachers are not part of the school staff, and students can opt in or out of SRE lessons. The school does not have control over the curriculum that is taught, rather it is provided by SRE providers[15]. But the school does control where and when SRE teachers teach their lessons and how well they are supported within the school. Secondly, the subject that is taught in SRE is different to GRE that is also taught in public schools, because SRE, like RE, focuses on one religion and is taught from a perspective of faith. The nature of the subject and how it is taught is discussed more fully in chapter two. Thirdly, SRE teachers are different to classroom teachers and

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[15]For example, Youthworks provides curriculum, support and training to Anglican and other protestant teachers in New South Wales, Confraternity of Christ groups in different Catholic dioceses provide curriculum, support and training to Catholic SRE teachers in New South Wales, and ACCESS Ministries provides similar curriculum, support and training to all CRE teachers in Victoria.

have different experiences to them. Their teaching is influenced by the context they teach in and the subject they teach. They come to school as visitors who are motivated by their faith to teach. It is their experiences and beliefs that are of particular interest in this study.

This study evolved from two recurring questions of the researcher regarding Christian religious education and Special Religion Education[16]: how does a teacher know if s/he is doing a good job? What makes a good teacher and a good teaching program? As Korthagen (2004, p. 78) points out, although "all over the world, many attempts are being made to describe the qualities [of a good teacher] by means of lists of competencies" it is extremely difficult to develop *the* definitive description of a good teacher. This is due to the complexity and intimacy of teaching that is embodied in different ways by different teachers in different situations. Therefore, while these questions of teaching "goodness" provided the starting point for thinking, this study acknowledges, and attends to the complexity, distinctiveness and individuation of SRE teaching and in so doing lands on exploring SRE pedagogy to increase understanding of both the nature of the lived pedagogy in SRE, and the factors that influence pedagogy in SRE.   It is guided by the following research question:

How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy?

This question puts the SRE teacher at the forefront of this study. The context of SRE and the nature of the subject are important for understanding SRE pedagogy, but it is the SRE teachers themselves that provide the insight into SRE that is of most interest. In order to understand SRE pedagogy it is therefore important to listen to the diverse voices of SRE teachers and to hear their stories; and in so doing to start to understand their experiences and beliefs and how these influence their pedagogy.

1.3   The importance/significance of the study

In their book exploring classroom pedagogy, *Teachers and Schooling: Making a Difference,* Hayes, Mills, Christie, and Lingard (2006) make the point that pedagogy needs to become "the focus of substantive professional conversations within schools" (p. 81). This need for a professional conversation is also important.

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[16] These questions have endured over the more than twenty years that the researcher has been involved in Christian education and SRE.

Such a conversation may be happening informally between teachers, or more formally within SRE Providers, however, there is an academic quiet surrounding this discussion. A review of the literature indicates that there is no formal research and discussion on SRE pedagogy. To initiate this conversation, SRE pedagogy needs to be held up to the light and explored. To understand the different perspective of SRE teachers and explore how they live out their faith in their pedagogy this conversation must include hearing from them as they talk about their experiences and beliefs.

This study is important because it initiates an academic exploration of SRE pedagogy by listening to the SRE teachers' voices. It may be of significance for SRE teachers, their support organisations and curriculum developers. Understanding SRE pedagogy will provide guidance for: (i) teachers as they go into their classrooms; (ii) SRE Providers as they provide training and other support; and (iii) curriculum developers as they consider the specific needs of SRE teachers. The study may also be significant to other religious educators in religious settings such as religious schools and churches, as well as peripatetic teachers and untrained volunteer teachers in other teaching situations.

1.4   The scope of the study

While SRE is provided by many different religious groups in Australian public schools, the scope of the study is limited to Christian SRE in public schools in New South Wales and Victoria. This delimitation was chosen for three reasons: (i) SRE is well established in Victoria and New South Wales; (ii) these states have the largest number of SRE teachers in Australia as they are the most populous states in Australia[17]; and (iii) because of my existing relationship in Victoria with ACCESS Ministries, the primary provider of SRE in Christian Victoria, and my long term involvement in SRE teaching in Sydney. Data in the form of interviews, teaching journals and document analysis was collected between August 2010 and March 2012. Twenty three SRE teachers from Victoria and New South Wales were interviewed between August 2010 and May 2012; sixteen teachers kept reflective journals

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[17] Total population of Australia = 23.032 million; Victoria = 5.713 million (24% of Australia's population); New South Wales = 7.381 million (32%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, March 2013 demographic statistics).

between April and September 2011; and coding and data analysis continued throughout 2013 and 2014.

1.5   Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into nine chapters. While Chapter One has described the context of SRE, Chapter Two provides a framework for understanding SRE pedagogy. As there is limited literature on SRE pedagogy, the chapter draws from research on classroom pedagogy and religious education pedagogy. It concludes by defining SRE pedagogy as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied.

Chapter Three describes the methodology used in this study. Constructivist grounded theory is the basis of the methodology; the categories generated from the grounded analysis were then used, along with relevant educational and social theories, The use of constructivist grounded theory methods is appropriate for this study because they are well suited to exploring issues of importance in people's lives where there has been limited research (McCann & Clark, 2003). It allows the voices of participants to be heard as the theory is constructed from the ground up, that is, from the people directly involved in SRE teaching. It is also well suited to exploring SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences because it is based on a research paradigm that acknowledges that individuals and groups construct their knowledge from a number of sources within their social environment. The chapter outlines the research methodology's epistemological paradigm, and explains the rationale for selecting constructivist grounded theory. It provides a brief reflexive statement of the researcher's own experiences and perspectives of SRE pedagogy. The research scope and data collection methods, and the participants involved in the study are described. The chapter also outlines the approach to trustworthiness in the research and ethical considerations that were considered.

Chapter Four describes how the data collected in the study was analysed and coded. Initial coding resulted in the construction of over nine hundred and fifty codes. These initial codes were organised into thirteen initial categories that were ultimately constructed into four conceptual categories. These four conceptual categories became the foundation of the discussion in Chapters Five to Eight. An important part of the

analysis was constructing an imagined conversation between the participants in the study for each of the conceptual categories. In the resulting four constructed conversations, the actual words of the participants are woven together to construct a coherent conversation focused around one of the four conceptual categories. Constructing an imagined conversation between the teachers provided a literary device for their voices to be heard as well as being integral to the analytic process. These conversations are lengthy pieces of writing and, with the exception of the conversation in Chapter Four, are included in the appendices.

Chapters Five to Eight discuss the four conceptual categories constructed during the data analysis with reference to relevant literature. These four conceptual categories explicate the SRE teachers' (i) experiences of guest/host relationships; (ii) experiences of vulnerability and authority; (iii) beliefs about truth and hope; and (iv) beliefs in the importance of relational teaching. They come together to form the SRE Pedagogy Lotus where subsequent layers are embedded within the previous layer. The SRE Pedagogy Lotus is a useful heuristic for representing and understanding the distinctive nature of SRE pedagogy. It represents the interconnectedness of the four conceptual categories with relational teaching at the heart of SRE teaching. Chapter Five explores the guest/host relationships in SRE teaching in light of Derrida's theory of hospitality. Chapter Six explores vulnerability and authority in SRE and draws from Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse and other writing on vulnerability and authority. Chapter Seven explores absolute and contingent truth and eschatological and immediate hope in SRE pedagogy. Chapter Eight explores relational teaching by drawing on van Manen's pedagogic relation, Derrida's notion of hospitality, Noddings interest in caring relationships, Buber's description of I-It and I-Thou relations, and Game and Metcalfe's discussion of social relations and teaching.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by synthesising the discussion of the four layers of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus to answer the research question:

How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy?

CHAPTER TWO: WHAT IS SRE PEDAGOGY?

SRE pedagogy is distinctive from other pedagogy in three ways: (i) the context in which it is taught, (ii) the nature of the subject and how it is taught, and (iii) the differences between an SRE teacher and a classroom or RE teacher. The broad context of SRE was described in Chapter One and this chapter explores the nature of religious education and how it is taught. Understanding both the context and the nature of religious education provides the starting point for understanding SRE pedagogy prior to hearing from the voices of the teachers in this study.

Imagine for a moment three teachers who are preparing for their day of teaching: Ms C, the classroom teacher in a public school; Ms F, the classroom teacher in a faith-based school, and Ms S, the SRE teacher[18].

> In the morning, Ms C, the year four teacher arrives early to organise her classroom and make sure that all the resources she needs for the day are ready. She looks around her room with satisfaction. At one end of the room she has desks arranged in groups of four for the twenty eight students in her class, and at the other end of the room is a reading corner with cushions and an old sofa. There is a collection of library books relating to the different cultural groups living in Australia, a subject area that the class is currently exploring in their unit called Celebrating Together. In the first lesson of the day the students are going to compare the different national and religious celebrations of the cultural groups that are represented in their class.

> Down the road in the local faith-based school Ms F, another year four teacher is preparing for her day. Like her public school counterpart she arrives early to organise her classroom. She is continuing a unit of work on the parables Jesus told and puts a bible on each student's desk ready for the lesson. When everything is ready she runs down to the school hall to meet some of her students before the bell. Her class is running the weekly chapel service and they are going to have a quick run through of the play about the Good Samaritan that they have prepared, as well as practice using the microphone to say the prayers they wrote in last week's religious education lesson.

> Ms S, the year four SRE teacher, kisses her two children goodbye in the school playground. They chat for a moment, but she cannot stay talking for long as she needs to get to the public school in the next suburb in time to teach an SRE lesson at 9.30am. As she drives, she glances over at the passenger seat where a large bag holds everything she needs for the lesson: the students' books, a box of pencils, some lesson props and photocopies of a page from the bible telling the Good Samaritan story. If the traffic lights go her way, she will get to the front office by 9.25, sign in and then wait outside the classroom

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[18] Each of these vignettes are drawn from the teaching experience of the researcher.

where she teaches until her lesson starts. That will give her time for a quick prayer for the lesson and the thirty five students in her class. She has a great activity for the students to do at their desks, but she is a little bit worried because there are not enough desks for all her students and last week a few of the students were very disruptive and the classroom teacher had to intervene and manage what was happening.

The way the day starts for these three teachers illustrates some of the similarities and differences experienced by classroom, RE and SRE teachers. They are all teachers with an allocated space where they teach a classroom filled with children. They all plan and prepare for lessons that they anticipate will engage their students in the learning process. While all three teachers will teach a lesson about religion, each lesson is different. As a classroom teacher in a public school, Ms C is permitted to teach General Religious Education (GRE) where she can focus on the "world's major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013, p. 3). In contrast, Ms F and Ms S will teach about religion from a position of faith, incorporating this into both what they teach and the way they teach it. The difference between Ms S and Ms F is that Ms F teaches within a context where the religion that is being taught is supported by the ethos of the school. Although different faith-based schools approach RE differently, this RE in faith-based schools is usually "influenced by the life of the wider Church community, parishes , families and schools" and its intended outcome is "the initiation and formation of the young person into the active life of the Church" (Healy, Hyde & Rymarz, 2004, p. 21). The religious dimension of a faith-based school is also expressed in activities such as chapel services, prayer groups and retreats. Ms S teaches about her own religion as a guest in a public school (SRE). She uses a curriculum that is developed by her SRE Provider and although she can share her experience of faith she cannot proselytise. The *Connect Teacher Book* (Cassis, 2012, p. 205) states that:

> The teaching and learning in the SRE class is first and foremost an educational activity. Its intention is to impart accurate understanding of the nature of the Christian faith, together with the skills appropriate for participation in learning.

For each of these teachers the context in which they teach as well as their beliefs and experiences will influence their pedagogy and how it is enacted in the classroom.

This chapter explores the distinctive nature of teaching about religion in SRE and how this influences its pedagogy by exploring pedagogy literature. There is extensive literature on both classroom pedagogy and RE pedagogy; however, there is no extant literature on the distinctive nature of SRE pedagogy. For this the researcher must rely on the related classroom and RE pedagogy literature, some of which is discussed in this chapter, and then hear from the voices of the teachers in the following chapters.

Classroom and RE pedagogy literature is an appropriate place to start this discussion because of the similarities that classroom, RE and SRE pedagogy share. As Buchanan (2005) points out, there is a pedagogical drift where "aspects of the pedagogical techniques and the rationale associated with a particular approach [to RE] surface" (2005, p. 20) and appear in subsequent RE approaches. Similarly, McGrath (2005) suggests that RE in faith-based schools can be divided into "four, chronologically overlapping relationships to the pedagogy operative in other learning areas" (p. 13). That is, RE pedagogy is in relationship with classroom pedagogy and is therefore influenced by the same trends in pedagogy. The contention of this chapter is that SRE is similarly influenced by current educational thinking and therefore an investigation into SRE pedagogy can start with an investigation of both classroom and its near relative, RE pedagogy.

Pedagogy is often defined in the literature in general terms with a common place reading being the methods of teaching, captured in definitions of pedagogy such as "the art and science of teaching" (Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003). Other literature describes it in terms of the views that teachers hold about knowledge and what it means to know and the values they bring to the classroom. A broader, multi-faceted understanding of pedagogy comes from viewing pedagogy through these three lenses: (i) how teachers view knowledge, their epistemology; (ii) the values teachers bring when they teach, their axiology; and (iii) how they teach, their methodology. Each of these views is discussed briefly in the following sections.

2.1   Epistemological lens

The epistemological lens through which a teacher or educational organisation views pedagogy will undergird all pedagogical practice (Reagan, 1999; Tickle, Brownlee, & Nailon, 2005). That is, how teachers think about knowledge and what it

means to know will influence their methodological and content decisions in their teaching. Questions of epistemology are equally important for SRE teachers who come into public school classrooms to teach about the beliefs and practices of their religious faith. Their views of religious knowledge and how it can be known will likewise influence the methodological decisions they make in their classrooms.

Tickle et al. (2005) point out that an individual's epistemological beliefs are related to their certainty about knowledge, how they organise knowledge, and the control they have over the knowledge (p. 712). They (and others, for example, Katz, 2000; Perry, 1981) describe an individual's epistemological beliefs as existing on a continuum where at one end knowledge is seen to be handed down by an authority, simple and certain (naïve); and at the other end knowledge is complex, uncertain and gained through reason (mature). However, Tickle et al conclude that these epistemological beliefs can be multi-dimensional and may exist in more than one location on the continuum. This is important for understanding SRE teachers' epistemological beliefs. Their epistemological beliefs may at the same time include believing in an absolute God who reveals truth through a sacred text (naïve) and also believing that human reason and experience contribute to the personal construction of knowledge about God and other faith issues (mature).

A naïve epistemology is often linked in the literature to a transmissive approach to pedagogy where the teacher is the holder of knowledge that needs to be passed onto the student receiving that knowledge (Watson & Uecker, 2007), or as Katz (2000, p. 137) puts it "teaching becomes an exercise in telling (or showing) and learning an exercise in remembering". Reciting a catechism or having the Bible read without comment are two examples of such a transmissive approach, as may be a visiting clergyman coming as the "holder of knowledge" to teach SRE. By contrast, a mature epistemological view is often associated with a pedagogy that anticipates that knowledge will be constructed by the teacher and student because it is not an entity that can be simply delivered or received. Katz (2000) relates this epistemology to teaching that "creates opportunities … for sharing belief through collaborative discourse" (p. 139) and Tickle et al (2005) describe it as a pedagogy that is more innovative, democratic, empathetic and reflective than its naïve predecessor. An SRE

lesson where students have the freedom to ask questions outside of the existing curriculum may be an example of this.

Positivist pedagogy and constructivist pedagogy further illustrate the difference between a naïve and mature epistemology. Positivist pedagogy recognises one single objective reality and sees knowledge as being transmitted from teacher to student in a sequential way. It often leads to teacher-centred teaching (Newman, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996) where the student is seen as an empty vessel to be filled through the teacher-directed transmission of knowledge (Murphy, 1997). In a now well-known term, Freire (2005, pp. 46-47) describes this as the "banking concept of education" where

1.   The teacher teaches and the students are taught.
2.   The teacher knows everything and the students know nothing.
3.   The teacher thinks and the students are thought about.
4.   The teacher talks and the students listen – meekly.
5.   The teacher disciplines and the students are disciplined.
6.   The teacher chooses and enforces his [sic] choice, and the students comply.

In contrast, constructivist pedagogy allows for the existence of a multitude of realities in any given situation. Students construct their knowledge of the world from their perceptions and experiences which are mediated through their previous knowledge (Simon, 1995), and teachers provide "diverse and multiple challenges, support in making connections and help students to develop responsibility for their own learning" (White, 2004a). Therefore, constructivist pedagogy is student-centred as it depends upon a student's ability to analyse, synthesise and evaluate information to create meaningful, personalised knowledge (Newman et al., 1996).

The relationship between epistemological beliefs and pedagogy is complex and often full of tension. Although SRE teachers may believe in an absolute, unchanging God who can be understood through reading the bible, their experiences of faith as part of day to day life will help them to construct their understanding of who God is. While their epistemology may lead to a transmissive approach as they pass on their knowledge of God to their students, it may also lead to a constructivist approach as they encourage their students to construct their own understanding of God through discussion, questions and activities that connect with their day to day lives. When one participant in the study describes what she is teaching as both "an

absolute truth" and "not black and white" that needs to be explored "like you explore any other piece of information" she reflects the tension between the naïve and mature epistemological views that a teacher can hold. A need for exploration is also important in the context of SRE where SRE teachers cannot make the assumption that all students will unquestioningly accept their faith and beliefs. SRE teachers need to build relationships with their students where they can encourage them to explore the different ideas in an SRE lesson in a safe and respectful way. While there is no one journey that the SRE teachers travel, it is important to listen to their stories and experiences to understand how their epistemological stances influence their pedagogy.

2.2   Axiological lens

It is also important to consider the way SRE teachers view pedagogy through an axiological lens. Pedagogy is not neutral or innocent (Bruner, 1996), it is influenced by a teachers' axiology. Axiology communicates a view of the learning process and the learner that reflects what is of value in education by addressing the question: what are the "conceptions to which worth, interest and goodness have been attributed" (Pazmino, 2008, p. 101). Both the axiology of an educational institution and the personal axiology of the teacher influence pedagogy. From an institutional perspective, Freire (2005) emphasises the need for clearly articulating values in education and calls for intentionality, integrity and honesty regarding these values. This is because the values of the institution that a teacher represents will shape what happens in the classroom. Taking an example from the history of SRE, in the early days of the Australian colonies, "there was a widespread belief that respectable clergy and school masters contributed to the moral well-being of the lower orders of the people" (Lawry, 1965, p. 170) and this axiological view was reflected in a substantial proportion of the school week being spent in moral religious education. The three teachers at the beginning of this chapter also illustrate how the values of the institution they represent influence how they teach about religion. For example, due to restrictions of the public school system, Ms C can teach objectively about religion but she cannot share her own faith (if she has one); whereas Ms F and Ms S can share their own faith and how they find it personally meaningful. Depending on the nature of the faith-based school where Ms F teaches she may be able to call her students to religious commitment, but due to the educational context that Ms S teaches in she

cannot call her students to make a personal commitment even if her personal axiology compels her to do so.

However, axiology is not just concerned with what is of institutional value in education. Beatty, Leigh, and Dean (2009) point out that teachers' views on "morality, values and right action" will shape the way they embody their pedagogical approach to teaching. As Ramsey and Fitzgibbons (2005, p. 345) point out:

> Who we are, what we believe, and what assumptions we hold about students, the material, and the world significantly affect what we do in the classroom, no matter the course content or teaching style.

A teacher's personal axiology, described by Palmer (1998, p. 4) as a teacher's "inner landscape of the teaching self" reflects his/her identity, integrity and goodness (1997, 1998) and therefore what happens in the classroom. For Palmer, the important pedagogical questions are not what should we teach or how should we teach, but who is the teacher? He goes on to state (1998, p. 7):

> I believe it [who is the teacher?] is the most fundamental question we can ask about teaching and those who teach – for the sake of learning and those who learn. By addressing it openly and honestly, alone and together, we can serve our students more faithfully, enhance or own well being, make common cause with colleagues, and help education bring more light and life to the world.

The personal identity of a teacher, that is, the answer to the "who is the teacher" question, may be influenced by his/her religious belief. For example, in his discussion on the contribution of biblical anthropology to pedagogy in Anglican (faith-based) schools, Cairney (2011, pp. 62-63) points out that a teacher's faith should

> inform [his/her] view of humanity, life's purpose, the self, the purpose of virtue and so on... Our pedagogical task as teachers is underpinned by a priority that acknowledges God's purposes for creating us in His image, to be people who live and relate in word and action to the God who [made Himself known].

However, a teacher's personal axiology is not only concerned with issues of self, it must also be concerned with who the student is and the nature of the student/teacher relationship. This is reflected in van Manen's (2006a, p. 31) definition of pedagogy as

> a certain encounter of togetherness between parent and child, teacher and pupil… a relationship of practical action between an adult and a young person who is on the way to adulthood.

Although his writings on pedagogical tone, tact and thoughtfulness (van Manen, 2002, 2006a) speak to the teacher, the child is always in full view. Teachers are encouraged to develop "a caring attentiveness to the unique: the uniqueness of children, the uniqueness of every situation, and the uniqueness of individual lives" (2002, p. 8) evoking a value-driven or axiological pedagogy.

Similarly, when Day (2009, p. 7) states that teaching is "a journey of hope based upon a set of ideals" and describes teaching as a passionate affair, he also reflects an axiological assumption about pedagogy. While not denying the place of teaching methodology, Day (2009, p. 6) observes that it is the teachers' passion for teaching, for their students and for their learning that "marks teachers out as good or better than good". His interest is in the values that motivate and sustain teachers so that they remain passionate about teaching. Taking the SRE teacher, Ms S as an example; she chooses to teach SRE because of the high value she places on teaching children about her religious faith. As a volunteer, her motivation comes from her passion about what she is teaching and the possible influence it may have on her students. In addition, the values she brings to the classroom may be drawn from what Cairney (2011) calls Christian virtues such as "justice, patience, mercy, forgiveness, obedience and compassaion" (p. 60). Her axiology therefore influences her pedagogy, but it is also influenced by the institution she represents which provides her with a curriculum and a religious value system that she shares.

In the increasingly secular and multicultural nature of Australian society that is reflected in public schools by the increasing numbers of children choosing not to attend SRE, the introduction of Ethics classes in New South Wales and the call for SRE reform by the Humanist Society in Victoria, the axiology of the SRE teacher may be different to that of the public school where s/he teaches. In such a context, the values that the SRE teachers hold and want to share may seem anachronistic to the students and classroom teachers in the schools where they teach. And yet while they may bring a different axiology to the classroom, their teaching bears pedagogical similarities to both their classroom and RE counterparts. This will be explored further in the discussion of religious education pedagogy later in this chapter. It is also why it is so important to hear from the teachers themselves to understand what their conceptions of worth, interest and goodness are and how these influence their pedagogy.

2.3   Methodological lens

Epistemology and axiology respectively reflect the 'what' and 'who' of pedagogy and influence the 'how' of pedagogy, that is, the methodological lens of pedagogy. For example, if SRE teachers believe that their students' knowledge about God comes from the bible (reflecting their epistemology), and the values they bring to the classroom (reflecting their axiology) are important, this may lead to them using strategies in their lessons that emphasise bible teaching and reflect the values they believe God has (reflecting their methodology).

Using terms like strategies, practices, tools and skills, much of the education literature views pedagogy through a methodological lens (for example, Anderson, 2004; Hack, 2004; Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate, 2003; Rowe, 2003). Teachers are at the core of methodological pedagogy, and teacher quality is often emphasised when methodology is discussed. When Darling-Hammond's (1998, p. 7) seminal work on the relationship between teacher effectiveness and learning outcomes contradicted "the longstanding myth that "anyone can teach" and that "teachers are born not made"; and emphasised that teachers need to have both an adequate knowledge of their subject and to have studied the "art and science of teaching" she viewed pedagogy through a methodological lens. Drawing on several hundred studies of teaching, schooling and reform initiatives she concluded that what teachers know and do is one of the most important influences in what students learn. She also drew on axiology when she concluded that "teachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in environments that allow them to know students well are critical elements of successful learning" (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 6). It is important to acknowledge, however, that the research was completed at a time when large numbers of unqualified teachers were working in schools in the United States. Darling-Hammond notes that 'more than 50,000 people who lack the training required for their jobs entered teaching annually on emergency or substandard licences' (1998, p. 6) and that, in schools with high minority enrolments, students had a less than fifty percent chance of having a qualified maths or science teacher. As such, the conclusions emphasise the need for trained teachers who are competent in their subject area rather than investigating what makes a qualified teacher effective.

Similarly, while acknowledging the effect of a student's literacy skills, attitudes, behaviours and home situation, Rowe (2003, p. 1) states that "what matters

most is quality teachers and teaching, supported by strategic teacher professional development". Bransford, Crown and Cocking's (2000) review of brain based learning research, the "engagement of strategies based on principles derived from an understanding of the brain" (Jensen, 2008, p. 4) that matches up developments in understanding neurological patterns with more traditional approaches to student learning, also emphasises the connection between learning and teachers; firmly establishing the importance of the teacher in the classroom as s/he guides and facilitates learning.

Much of the education literature on pedagogy discusses things that teachers should do in the classroom (their methodology). For example, Hattie (2003) identifies five major dimensions of excellent teachers: excellent teachers (i) identify essential representations of their subject; (ii) guide learning through classroom interactions; (iii) monitor learning and provide feedback; (iv) attend to affective attributes; and (v) influence student outcomes. Anderson (2004) also emphasises a methodological view of pedagogy when he describes the importance of teachers: (i) structuring their lessons for effective teaching so that students see their lessons in terms of a larger unit of work and connect new learning with prior learning; (ii) giving opportunities to practise and apply what they are learning; and (iii) helping students productively engage in the learning activities. This is similar to the five characteristics of an effective teacher described by Darling-Hammond (1998) who states that expert teachers: (i) connect new ideas with things the students already know; (ii) actively engage students in applying knowledge to real world situations; (iii) create lessons that connect learning to students' experience; (iv) diagnose problems in students' learning and identify strengths on which to build; and (v) create incremental steps and help students progress to more complicated ideas and actions. Pedagogy that is viewed through a methodological lens can be taken to an extreme when teaching is viewed in terms of mastering a list of skills (for example, Lemov, 2010) . In *Teach Like a Champion*, Lemov describes forty nine specific, concrete, actionable teaching techniques that he believes can be practised and perfected by all teachers to increase their effectiveness. For example, he describes how a teacher should only accept students' answers that are in complete sentences.

However, teaching is far more than a checklist of techniques, Shulman (1987), for example, describes an effective teacher as someone who orchestrates a flow of

ideas that moves through comprehension, transformation, instruction, evaluation, reflection and new comprehension. The pedagogical approach of the ACCESS Ministries (Paddison, 2008) teacher's manuals reflects this flow when it emphasises the importance of students making connections between their experiences and questions, and the beliefs and values of the Christian faith. The lessons in these teacher's manuals present a flow that moves students from their existing personal experience to a guided discovery (comprehension and instruction) to student exploration (comprehension and transformation) to student reflection (reflection, evaluation and new comprehension). Indeed, an effective teacher needs to be "equipped with subject matter knowledge and an evidence- and standards-based repertoire of pedagogical skills that are demonstrably effective in meeting the development and learning needs of all students" (Ingvarson & Rowe, 2008, p. 6).

Classroom management where teachers promote both positive classroom environments and deal with disruptive behaviour (Anderson, 2004), is a significant concern of pedagogical methodology. It is also a major concern for novice teachers (Anderson, 2004, Hackett, 2007). Ainley and Luntley (2007, p. 1129) explain that expert teachers "make use of a large number of well-established routines to manage aspects of classroom practices". They compare this to the way that novice teachers spend so much time on managing the classroom that they are not able to monitor student progress. Likewise, Tsui (2007) explains that by establishing classroom norms and routines, effective teachers prevent disruption and allow more time to be devoted to teaching. As SRE teachers are often professionally untrained it is not surprising that classroom management is emphasised in their training programs. For example, one of the five, two hour training modules used in Youthworks SRE accreditation training is dedicated to classroom management.

While teacher quality is an important aspect of pedagogy, there are several challenges to teacher quality that SRE teachers may face. While all SRE teachers complete training provided by the SRE providers, many of them do not have professional teacher training. For example, less than ten percent of the Christian SRE teachers in Victoria have formal teaching qualifications (Denise Nicholls, Director of Christian Education, Access Ministries, personal communication, 9 September, 2009). Their understanding of teaching may be derived from their own past experiences as a student in a classroom, teaching they have done in the church context, and

observations of their children's classroom teachers. In addition, the breadth and depth of SRE teachers' content knowledge will vary from the limited theological training they receive in the SRE provider training, to the graduate level theological training that many full time ministers who are teaching SRE will have. The context in which they teach also influences teacher quality because of the possible dissonance between their epistemology and axiology and that of the classroom or school community. This may result in the subject they teach being perceived as lacking relevance or intellectual integrity by the school or students, and as a consequence students not taking their teaching seriously or treating them with respect. Finally, the challenge of the SRE teaching environment may influence teacher quality. As was illustrated in the vignette at the beginning of the chapter, SRE teachers like Ms S often do not have access to their classroom until the lesson begins, they must carry everything with them, the classroom is not set up for their needs, and the classroom teacher can intervene in their lesson. How SRE teachers deal with these challenges will be influenced by their epistemology and axiology that helps to determine the pedagogical methodologies they use. This study hears from the voices of the SRE teachers as they describe these experiences.

In sum, it is clear that pedagogy is often viewed and discussed in the literature through a methodological lens. However, pedagogy is multifaceted and should be seen through epistemological, axiological and methodological lenses to give a fuller understanding of pedagogy. This study is based on such an understanding of pedagogy that encompasses the epistemology of SRE teachers, the values they bring into the classroom, and the methods they use to teach. It also recognises that pedagogy is influenced by context and can be subject specific. As many SRE teachers do not have formal education training they may construct their understanding of pedagogy from their own experiences of schooling; other education settings they participate in, SRE teacher training they receive, the explicit or implicit pedagogy of the teaching resources they use, and their beliefs about the subject they teach.

2.4   Religious education pedagogy in faith-based schools

Due to the lack of literature on SRE pedagogy, this chapter now turns to RE pedagogy literature to develop an understanding of SRE pedagogy. The section starts with an exploration of different definitions of SRE pedagogy. RE pedagogy is discussed with particular reference to religious education using the four phases of

McGrath's (2005) *Changing Framework for Learning in Religious Education.* The four phases are: (i) *RE like other learning* that existed up to the late 1960s; (ii) *RE unlike other learning,* ongoing from 1970; (iii) *RE like other learning* (again), ongoing from 1985; and (iv) *All learning can be religious,* ongoing from the mid 1990s. These will be further discussed in the following sections.

However, prior to a discussion about RE pedagogy, it is important to note that there are three contexts in which RE in faith-based schools takes place (Fleming, 2002). Firstly, there is the classroom context with its "structured curriculum, with teaching and learning practices similar to those used in other subjects within the total school curriculum" (Fleming, p. 50). This classroom context is similar for Ms C, Ms F and Ms S. Secondly, there are other religious education activities outside of the classroom that may be compulsory or voluntary. These include retreats, prayer groups, chapel services, and lunchtime groups. This context is generally only evident in faith-based schools, although some schools in New South Wales allow Christian organisations to run voluntary lunchtime groups[19]. Thirdly, there is the overall religious dimension or ethos of the school that the entire school submits to. This context is only evident in Ms F's school. In general, SRE only operates within the classroom context, there are no prayer groups or chapel services, and the ethos of the school is not faith-based. Therefore this review of RE literature is particularly concerned with literature relating to the classroom context of RE.

Like other pedagogy literature, religious education literature defines RE pedagogy in diverse ways. However, each of these definitions reveals the close relationship between RE pedagogy and other classroom pedagogy. For example, reflecting a methodological way of viewing pedagogy, Grimmitt (2000, p. 17) in his book, *Pedagogies of Religious Education* defines pedagogy as "a theory of teaching and learning encompassing aims, curriculum, content and methodology". White (2003, p. 17) a researcher in Roman Catholic RE draws on both epistemology and methodology when he states that

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[19] Scripture Union support Christians who want to run voluntary lunch time clubs in New South Wales public schools were students in years 5 and 6 can learn more about Christianity.

> … pedagogy represents the underlying rationale that informs the selection of specific learning strategies and is capable of incorporating an eclectic array of methodologies matched to the particular needs of the student cohort.

Stern (2010), a professor of education and religion, defines pedagogy as a teacher's approach to teaching, or the professional practice of teaching. He incorporates both methodology and epistemology when he compares two pedagogies that result in either

> the teacher as authoritative transmitter of knowledge and skills…[or] an entirely child-centred approach where the teacher merely facilitates the pupils' exploration" (Stern, 2010, p. 134).

Hyde and Rymaz's (2004, p. 22) statement about the goals of RE reflect an axiological view of pedagogy. They believe that the goals of RE are more likely to be achieved when:

> … the learner engages in a stimulating and challenging environment, where religious content can be taught, Christian values and attitudes and values can be modelled and fostered, where Christian action is encouraged and spirituality is expressed.

Other writers in RE pedagogy such as Fraser, Hines and Taouk (2004, p. 60) draw from the three lenses of pedagogy when they conclude that RE pedagogy is more than determining appropriate teaching methodologies and that an examination of pedagogy must be "located within the deeper philosophical understandings of knowledge, knowing and the knower and the resultant relationships and expressions of values". Likewise, this study is interested in a broader approach that includes epistemological and axiological views of pedagogy. McGrath's (2005) *Framework for Learning in Religious Education* provides a helpful way of exploring this broader view of pedagogy.

McGrath (2005) identifies four phases of RE in faith-based schools each with a particular pedagogy. He believes that it is

> ... possible to divide classroom Religious Education in religiously affiliated schools in Australia over the last forty years into four chronologically overlapping relationships to the pedagogy operative on other learning areas.

That is, McGrath acknowledges that there is a close relationship between classroom pedagogy and RE pedagogy in faith-based schools, and that changes in classroom pedagogy are matched with changes in RE pedagogy. This chapter takes his contention one step further and suggests that SRE is also in relationship with RE and

classroom pedagogy. The following discussion works through McGrath's four phases by viewing each phase through the three lenses of pedagogy: epistemology, axiology and methodology to help explicate the nature of SRE pedagogy.

2.4.1   Phase one: RE like other learning

The first phase of RE pedagogy was a confessional, catechetical approach to RE whose function was to initiate and socialise individuals into the church. This phase of RE pedagogy was "exclusively concerned with the communication of revealed truth" (Engebretson, 2004, p. 268) and based on the epistemological assumption that knowledge is something that can be objectively passed down through the generations (English, 2004). As has already been noted, this epistemology results in a pedagogy that Lovat (1989, p. 3) describes as

> information-giving and rote-learning in an authority-to-subjects passing on of essential truths from one generation to the next.

Such an approach reflects "the enormous confidence of an institution to be able to give answers to complex questions without the need for elaboration" (R. Rymarz, 2007, p. 66). Importantly for this discussion, this approach was not unique to RE, it was also found in a variety of other learning areas (McGrath, 2005).

RE in Catholic schools prior to the 1960s exemplifies this phase of RE pedagogy. It was based on the catechism[20]: the exposition of the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church that was taught using didactic teaching and rote learning with a question and answer format (de Souza, 2005). There is also evidence of this approach in the precursor to SRE in public schools. The 1856 Commission of Inquiry describes the RE in public schools, stating that "the catechisms are learned by rote, and no care appears to be taken to enable the children to comprehend the meaning" (in Fogarty, 1959, p. 116).

Although McGrath states that this is "the only phase that no longer exists" (p. 13), a catechetical approach may still be influencing the SRE teachers' pedagogy in two ways. Firstly, as many SRE teachers are retired, they may have experienced SRE

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[20] For example, The Red Catechism contained 236 short questions and answers such as Q61. What is the name of the true Church founded by Jesus Christ? The true Church founded by Jesus Christ is the Holy Catholic Church. Q194. How often should we receive Holy Communion? We should receive Holy Communion frequently, even every day if possible (Healy, Hyde and Rymaz, 2004).

or RE being taught using a catechetical approach when they were students. Borg (2004) and others, for example Sugrue (1997) points out that student teachers come to teaching with an "apprenticeship of observation" due to their experiences of being a student. Borg (p. 274) explains that this apprenticeship:

> … provides student teachers with 'default options', a set of tried and tested strategies which they can revert to in times of indecision or uncertainty.

That is, there are times when student teachers will draw on their experiences when they were students in a classroom, rather than on the training they are receiving, to decide what to do in a classroom. It seems likely that this is also the case for SRE teachers, who may revert to their experiences as students as they teach SRE regardless of any training they have received or guidance from their Teacher Books. They may also use their experiences in other contexts such as the churches they attend which leads to the second point.

There has recently been renewed interest in the use of catechisms in some churches. For example, in his article, *Catechesis, Developmental Theory, and a Fresh Vision for Christian Education,* Espinoza (2014, p. 8) proposes that

> Catechesis should be given its rightful place as the overarching process for understanding and cultivating Christian formation and lifelong spiritual growth.

Similarly, Smelley (2013, p. 309) writes that the catechism "is an underutilised educational methodology that, if revived would benefit the local church and homes alike". If churches are taking this on board, it is possible that a catechetical approach may be being used in the churches where the SRE teachers attend, and they may see value in such an approach when they teach SRE. Therefore although McGrath suggests that this phase no longer exists, there may be evidence of it in the SRE classroom.

2.4.2   Phase two: RE unlike other learning

As the didactic pedagogical methodology of the catechism lost credibility in both faith-based and public schools, RE moved into McGrath's second phase, *RE unlike other learning.* In this phase RE moved from being like other learning that was happening in the classroom, to a faith-forming approach whose aim is to "convince, convert or strengthen commitment" (Lovat, 1989, p. 1) and where students are "encouraged to develop a personal relationship of trust, love and intimacy with Jesus

Christ" (Healy, Howard, & Hyde, 2001, p. 1). This phase is unlike other learning because it represents a distinctly different pedagogy to that used in other learning areas (Lovat, 1989).

The kerygmatic approach and life-centred approach are two examples of pedagogy in the second phase of RE, *RE unlike other learning*. The kerygmatic approach focuses on a proclamation that "encourages students to encounter Jesus as their personal saviour" (Buchanan, 2005, p. 23). The underlying epistemological assumption is that Jesus can be known by focusing on how He is presented in the bible and as a result, students can be "inculcated into life of faith within the community" (Buchanan, 2005, p. 24). In contrast, the life-centred approach captures a broader epistemology which emphasises that God is revealed not only in doctrine but also in people and in life events (Fleming, 2002). It has a four point process which emphasises sharing life experiences between students and the teacher; reflecting on these experiences; linking these reflections with knowledge; and expressing faith (Engebretson, 2002; Fleming, 2002). This emphasis on reflection and life experience led to diminishing the importance of knowledge (Engebretson, 2002) about religion and it has been criticised for its lack of content or academic rigour resulting in RE where

> spontaneity and informality… was encouraged, and efforts to suggest clear educationally developed curriculum structures were viewed with suspicion"

> (Engebretson, 2002, p. 39).

Viewed through an axiological lens, the values of informality, personal sharing, relevance and process over content are important in this phase (Rossiter, 1999) where there is an emphasis on making RE "a very personal activity which was more relevant to the lives of students" (Rossiter, 1999, p. 10). Also reflecting an axiological view of pedagogy, Fraser et al (2004) describe four axiological cornerstones of Catholic education: liberation from oppression; the search for truth; the dignity of the human person; and the common good. Like McGrath's second phase of RE pedagogy, they emphasise that pedagogy that is different to other pedagogy that should lead to transformation of both the self and the world.

Many researchers in Catholic RE also emphasise the importance of a teacher's witness to faith (Buchanan & Hyde, 2006; Hackett, 2007; R. M. Rymarz, 2001). In

their research on religious education coordinators in the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne, Buchanan and Hyde (2006) identify five roles of an RE teacher in a Catholic school: a qualified teacher; a deliverer of high quality curriculum; someone who is involved in personal spiritual formation; a witness to faith; and a portrayer of the image of the Catholic school. The final three roles reflect an axiological view of pedagogy. They emphasise that RE in a confessional setting is not neutral, and that the teacher's personal example is an important aspect of pedagogy. In comparison, an SRE teacher may or may not be: a qualified teacher, a deliverer of high quality curriculum, involved in personal spiritual formation, or a witness to faith. To find out requires hearing from the SRE teachers themselves. In addition, SRE teachers do not portray the image of the school where they teach because they come as outsiders into the school so this role is different to RE teachers in faith-based schools.

Moore (1991) identifies different images of RE teachers in a confessional faith-based school setting. They include the 'reservoir' who has lots of information to pass on to students; the 'facilitator' who provides skills for students to find out a pool of information; the 'model' who tries to incarnate religious values and ideals; the 'ambassador' who represents the desired beliefs and practices of the institution; the 'liberator' who works with others in their struggle for justice and freedom, and the 'evangelist' who wants to share the good news of God with students. Each of these images reflects axiological assumptions of pedagogy that will influence a teacher's methodology and may be evident in the SRE teachers' experiences. This study gives an opportunity to hear from the voices of the SRE teachers and to understand how they see their role as they teach SRE.

The influence that this phase of RE would have on SRE unearths a tension that exists in SRE. SRE is a faith-based form of RE, the SRE teachers have a faith that they want to share with their students. However, while SRE is a place where SRE teachers want their students to learn about who Jesus is, unlike faith-based RE, SRE is not the place for students to "encounter Jesus as their personal saviour" because calling them to a faith commitment (proselytism) is not permitted in SRE. However, the emphasis on informality and personal sharing, as well as the role of the teacher as a witness and ambassador may be reflected in the emphasis SRE teachers put on developing relationships with their students that is further discussed in Chapter Eight.

2.4.3   Phase three: RE like other learning

In the third phase, *RE like other learning,* a distinction is made between the "academic or educational context" (Buchanan, 2005, p. 29) of schools and the individual development of personal faith. In this phase RE is once again taught like other subjects. An emphasis on educational criteria is what makes RE in this third phase of RE *like other learning*. This phase represents an epistemology and axiology that is influenced by shifting societal values relating to RE in the United Kingdom (and elsewhere). The 1944 United Kingdom Education Act made the teaching of RE mandatory (Bastide, 1992). In the 1970s, researchers such as Ninian Smart (1973) questioned the dominance of teaching about Christianity in state RE and pointed out that RE was "perceived as a confession of Christian faith" (Buchanan, 2005). Smart developed the phenomenological model of RE as "an approach to the study of religion that was appropriate to the multi-cultural and multi-faith community that Britain had become" (Copley, 2004, p. 4). An epistemological and axiological shift therefore influenced the pedagogical approach to mandatory RE in UK, and due to "pedagogical drift" (McGrath, 2005) also influenced how RE was taught in Australia.

This shift is exemplified in the way that many expressions of RE moved in this phase from being education *into* Christianity, that is teaching for conversion, to education *about* Christianity (Astley, 1994). By teaching about Christianity, an RE teacher can emphasise an objective view of religion that is not confessional. Such an approach allows RE to find a place in the state education system in the form of courses such as the NSW Board of Studies Course, *Studies in Religion.* The course is designed to enable "students who live in a multi-faith and multicultural society to progress from a broad understanding of religious traditions to specific studies within these traditions" (Board of Studies, 2005, p. 2). Such courses also provide an approach for faith-based schools that elect to move away from a faith-forming or confessional RE approach. The popularity of this approach was reflected in 2009, when it was the fifth most studied subject in the NSW HSC with 60-65% of Catholic school students enrolled in it (Patty, 2009).

However, an emphasis on educational outcomes is not limited to non-confessional RE. Faith-forming RE can also emphasise the importance of "the same educational practices that are found in other key learning areas" (Healy et al., 2004). Rossiter (1981, p. 168) suggests that in a Catholic school there is "a need for more

emphasis on the educational rather than on a faith-developing paradigm for the classroom curriculum". Hence, the formal curriculum should be "characterised by its intellectual approach to the study" (Souza, 2005) that is the school context, and complemented by the "community building, liturgical life, retreats, voluntary youth groups and pupil-teacher relationships" (Rossiter, 1981), that is the religious dimension or ethos of the Catholic school. In so doing, the RE is divided into faith-informing (the classroom context) and faith-forming (the faith-based school context and ethos). Engebretson (2004, p. 270) concludes that an educational theory of RE should be both knowledge centred and have "the capacity to nurture personal religious faith through knowledge, understanding and critical inquiry".

This third phase of RE points to the close relationship between classroom, RE and SRE pedagogies that emphasise educational content. SRE teachers teach in this context and work with lesson plans that include educational outcomes. They may talk about their faith, but they must also give students the space to express different opinions. The Access Teacher Book (Paddison, 2007, p. 66) emphasises this when it states that:

> The approach to Christian religious education through this program is an educational one. [S]RE teachers give students information and experience in Christian beliefs and practices as clearly as possible and respect their response to it. [They] may not persuade students to believe.

An emphasis on educational content, the development of a relaxed environment where teachers and students can share their experiences, and the objective sharing of the personal faith of SRE teachers point to the tension that many SRE teachers may be experiencing in their pedagogy.

2.4.4   Phase four: All learning can be religious

Finally, in the fourth phase, *all learning can be religious,* McGrath (2005) explains that "all learning in Christian school settings should be fundamentally Christian and potentially can contribute to a total education that promotes Christian discipleship" (2005, p. 19). While an SRE teacher does not work in such a school context, this final phase of RE pedagogy does influence SRE pedagogy. This is because it is a reminder that SRE teachers do not necessarily teach in an environment that supports the ethos they bring with them. The public schools where they teach do not "promote Christian discipleship" so they come in as outsiders to teach a subject

that may be viewed with ambivalence, suspicion or hostility. It is possible that their pedagogical decisions will be altered as a result of their experience in this environment.

In sum, SRE is a single tradition approach to RE that focuses on the distinctive religious tenets and beliefs of the religion being taught. SRE pedagogy, like RE pedagogy, incorporates the three lenses of pedagogy: epistemology, axiology and methodology. The discussion of the four phases of RE is helpful because like RE, SRE takes place in a school setting and has been through phases in its development. Initially SRE shared the epistemological, axiological and methodological pedagogy of McGrath's (2005) first phase of RE and had a catechetical and didactic approach. McGrath points out that each of the subsequent phases still exist in some form. SRE may well be influenced by all phases: from phase one as SRE teachers draw from their apprenticeship of observation and any catechetical experiences in their churches; from phase two as they share their faith in a relaxed and relational way; from phase three as they work with an educational outcome paradigm that their teaching resources guide them to use; and finally from phase four as they work within schools that do not see all learning as religious. The challenge of this study is to determine how the SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence what their pedagogy is like and this is best served by hearing from the teachers.

2.5   Religious education in the church based setting

To be authorised to teach SRE, SRE teachers must be approved by their parish priest, minister or pastor (Confraternity of Christian Doctrine (Archdiocese of Sydney), 2011; NSW and ACT Baptist Churches, 2014; Youthworks, 2014) and are therefore connected with their local church. In addition to attending their churches, many of the SRE teachers in this study also describe times when they have taught at the Sunday school. Therefore, their SRE pedagogy may be powerfully influenced by their church experiences and the pedagogical approaches they see in their churches, it is important to briefly explore RE in the church based setting. Grimmitt (1973) differentiates between the role of the school and the role of the church in the study and teaching of religion. He argues that the confessional approach to RE used by churches to lead students to commitment to Christianity had been inappropriately transposed into school classrooms. In effect, he believes that faith-forming and confessional RE should remain in churches and school RE should be non-

confessional, objective explorations of what people believe. Westerhoff (2000, p. 5) makes the reverse criticism, saying that the "schooling-instructional paradigm" of school RE has been inappropriately transposed to the church. Such an instructional view is probably too narrow for the many dimensions of education that take place in a church that include

> … transmitting knowledge, [for] shaping people through their participation in their community's activities, [for] helping people on their individual faith journeys, and [for] developing a critical consciousness that leads to faithful service in the world.

<div align="right">(Tye, 2000, p. 14)</div>

Much of the literature on religious education in churches views pedagogy through a methodological lens by focusing on formal religious instruction and emphasising the acquisition of "skills, techniques and methodologies necessary for teaching" (Tye, 1988, p. 338). However, theological writers like Martin (2001, 2003) also argue for a broader communal view of education in the church which involves not just learning about the faith; but also developing relationships, rituals, individual and corporate knowledge, service, and a shared vision of a faith community. Martin believes that it is not enough for teachers in churches to "simply talk *about* the water of life; rather, the objective is to lead people to the water, the everlasting water that quenches our thirst" (Martin, 2001, p. 255). In effect, he is arguing for RE pedagogy that is similar to McGrath's unlike school learning.

Pedagogy is also viewed through an axiological and methodological lens when church based RE literature describes looking to Jesus as the 'master teacher' (Nixon, 2007) to provide the example of how to teach. The divine revelation of God through Jesus and the bible are seen to provide a model for the teacher to follow and imitate in teaching the faith (Greshem, 2006). In this model it is understood that just as God made Himself known to His people and adapted His message to different situations and audiences; so too should the teacher adapt his/her message to the needs and capabilities of each student. This so called divine pedagogy has its roots in Clement of Alexandria, a leading Christian thinker and writer of the third century AD (Kovacs, 2009) who presented Jesus as "the consummate teacher who seeks to train all humanity up to perfection" (Kovacs, 2009, p. 264). He explains that the teacher is to be the living image of Jesus. As a result, what becomes important is the teacher's

"own participation in the truth and salvation of God and the ability to communicate and foster that personal faith and insight among students" (Greshem, 2006, p. 26). Stein (1994) describes Jesus as a fascinating, outstanding teacher who crowds gathered to hear. He says that it was what Jesus taught; who Jesus was; and how Jesus taught that made Him a teacher to be imitated. These aspects mimic the epistemology, axiology and methodology pedagogical lenses discussed in this chapter.

Although there may be an emphasis on methodology in church based RE, the literature also focuses on pedagogical axiology. For example, Tye (2008) emphasises that there is more to teaching than skills and methods.

> When I ask people to describe a teacher in their lives who had a significant impact on them, they seldom talk about the specific content the teacher taught them or how skilled the teacher was at teaching methods. Instead, I hear a list of the teacher's personal qualities…I have come to the conclusion that being a teacher has as much to do with qualities of being, with who you are, as it does with what you do.
>
> (Tye, 2008, p. 19)

She identifies six qualities or values that are present in effective teachers in the church: a commitment to Jesus; self-awareness; the ability to listen; being teachable; patience; and faithfulness.

Research such as that reported in *Effective Christian Education: A National Study of Protestant Congregations* (Benson & Eklin, 1990) also identifies both the axiological and methodological aspects of pedagogy. This seminal research focused on the Christian education programs and events offered by 561 North American Protestant churches to children, teenagers and adults. It found that effective teachers have a mature faith; care about their students; know educational theory and methods for teaching; create a sense of community; emphasise life experience as an occasion for spiritual insight; encourage independent thinking and questioning; emphasise the natural unfolding of faith; and recognise that each person's faith journey is unique.

This brief review of literature on church-based pedagogy indicates an emphasis on both axiology and methodology. Although Grimmitt (1973) suggests that school RE should not be confessional and that this should be left to churches, it may be that SRE teachers walk a fine line between confessional and non-confessional SRE. They cannot call students to faith in SRE, but they teach as representatives of

their churches and faith. They teach in public schools that do not have a faith-based ethos (compared to McGrath's *All learning is religious*) and yet they bring the ethos of their faith with them. To understand whether SRE teachers model their teaching on Jesus as Greshem (2006) suggests, or the importance they place on relationships, ritual or community as described by Martin (2001) it is important to hear from the SRE teachers themselves.

2.6   Conclusion

This chapter has provided a framework for exploring SRE pedagogy through the three lenses of epistemology, axiology, and methodology to develop a broad understanding of SRE pedagogy. SRE pedagogy shares many characteristics with classroom and RE pedagogy because of the school context in which it operates where, for example, students are taught in a classroom setting, using a curriculum that emphasises outcomes; and due to the "pedagogical drift" (Buchanan 2005) that occurs between classroom, RE and SRE pedagogy and RE pedagogy. SRE teachers may draw from their experience of Christian education in a church setting, but SRE is not the same as Christian education in a church because there is no faith community in the public schools that the students are a part of. SRE is distinctive from other pedagogy due to its historical and classroom context, the nature of the subject and the teachers who teach SRE. In particular, it is important to note that firstly, the voluntary nature of the SRE class influences the SRE teachers' pedagogy, as they teach a group of students who may choose not to continue attending the lessons. Secondly, the distinction between faith-forming and non-confessional RE is blurred in SRE; it may actually lie somewhere between education *into* Christianity and education *about* Christianity, and also have some of the attributes of teaching that occurs in the church context. Thirdly, the SRE teachers are unpaid guests of the school who teach in classrooms that are not their own.

Hayes et al. (2006, p. 81) state that pedagogy needs to become "the focus of substantive professional conversations within schools". This is also the case for both SRE teachers and SRE Providers. To initiate such a conversation, SRE pedagogy needs to be held up to the light and explored. This study is one addition to the conversation and the light shedding needed in SRE pedagogy. The following definition of SRE pedagogy guides this study:

SRE Pedagogy is the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied.

There can be pedagogy for different subjects such as mathematics and RE; or different situations such as teaching GRE in a public school, teaching Christian education in a religious school, or teaching SRE in a public school. This definition highlights that although SRE pedagogy has some common elements that it shares with classroom pedagogy because of the school context in which it is taught, it is distinctive due to the historical context, the subject that is taught and who SRE teachers are. As pedagogy is the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences, the expression of a teacher's pedagogy will to some extent be made manifest in what s/he does in the classroom. Of course, each SRE teacher's pedagogy will be an expression of his/her approach to knowledge, the values s/he holds, and his/her capacity to operationalise these in practical ways in his/her classroom. It will be different for each individual just as each voice in the data will be distinctive. However, there is a collective aspect of SRE pedagogy that allows for the description of an SRE pedagogy that is embodied slightly differently in each SRE teacher.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore SRE pedagogy. This exploration of SRE pedagogy presupposes a pedagogy that is particular to SRE; which in some important aspects is different not only to classroom pedagogy but also to RE pedagogy. This difference lies in the context in which SRE is taught, the nature of the subject, and in the teachers themselves. SRE is not simply teaching about religion, it is also teaching about belief and presenting a spiritual worldview. It is taught by people who are committed believers and are passionate about their belief. The majority of these teachers are not professional teachers; they are people who are trained by SRE Providers specifically to teach SRE. Moreover, although SRE takes place in a school setting, the SRE teaching environment is very different to the classroom teaching environment. Teachers are guests, sometimes unwelcome ones; their lessons go for up to sixty minutes a week; and the majority of them teach from highly prescriptive teaching manuals.

Just as it is important that pedagogy becomes "the focus of substantive professional conversations within schools" (Hayes et al., 2006, p. 81), SRE pedagogy calls for similar professional conversations to ensure the quality of learning in an SRE classroom. Such a conversation may be occurring informally between teachers, or even more formally with the SRE Providers who train teachers and provide them with teaching resources. These conversations are important as they will influence SRE pedagogy, however, there is an academic quiet surrounding this conversation. A qualitative paradigm, and particularly the choice to use constructivist grounded theory methods, is founded on the need to increase the quality and focus of this conversation. Constructivist grounded theory

> … is a widely used qualitative research methodology that seeks to inductively distil issues of importance for specific groups of people, creating meaning about these issues through analysis and the modelling of theory.

> (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006a, p. 8)

It is well suited to exploring issues where limited research has been conducted (McCann & Clark, 2003) and is therefore an appropriate choice for this study.

In this study, SRE pedagogy is defined as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to

contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied. This study enters the fledgling conversation by aiming to increase the understanding of both the nature of SRE pedagogy and the factors that influence it, as heard in the voices of the SRE teachers themselves. It is guided by the following research question: How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy? Such a question requires attending to the meanings made by individual teachers and the resonating patterns across their voices, because it is both their unique experiences and common understandings that explicate the distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy.

This chapter outlines the research methodology's epistemological paradigm, and explains the rationale for selecting constructivist grounded theory methods. It explains the affordances of these methods for capturing the unique and common patterns in the voices of the teachers interviewed in order to answer the research question. It also provides a brief reflexive statement of the researcher's own experiences and perspectives of SRE pedagogy. The research scope and data collection methods are described. The chapter also outlines the approach to trustworthiness in the research and ethical considerations that were considered. Chapter Four discusses the analysis of the data.

3.1   Research design assumptions

A research paradigm is the basic set of beliefs that guides research (Brickhous & Bodner, 1992) by framing the types of questions to ask (Broido & Manning, 2002) and informing the methodological decisions that guide procedural methods (Crotty, 2003). It is therefore important for a researcher to select a research paradigm that is congruent with his/her beliefs about the nature of reality; the relationships between the knower and what can be known; and how best to describe reality (Annells, 1996; Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006b) and the kind of data that is collected.

This study is based on a constructivist paradigm where there is "no single, 'real' reality" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 64), rather, there are multiple, complex and not easily quantifiable (Broido & Manning, 2002) realities constructed by individuals and groups within their social environment. In a similar way, SRE teacher pedagogy is also complex and not easily quantifiable because teachers construct their knowledge from a number of sources including their experiences, beliefs and practices; the training they receive from SRE providers; and the teaching resources they use. There

is added complexity because there is no archetypal SRE teacher. For example, some SRE teachers are trained classroom teachers and some have no professional training; some are employed by their churches to teach SRE and some are volunteers; some are retirees and some are young mothers; some must use a designated teaching resource and others can choose the resource they use; and some teach in small country schools while others teach in large inner city schools. These factors all lead to the diverse nature of SRE pedagogy and undergird the appropriateness of a constructivist paradigm in this study.

The methodology selected for this study is derived from constructivist grounded theory. Rejecting the idea that knowledge is an object to be found in the data, a constructivist paradigm "eschew[s] claims to idealistic versions of knowledge" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 276). It allows theory to be constructed from data and extant literature, that in this study includes van Manen's (2002, 2006a) pedagogic relation, Derrida's hospitality (2000b, 2005), Friere's pedagogy (2005), Palmer's (1998) emphasis on the inner working of the teacher, and the relational nature of teaching in both Metcalfe and Game (2006, 2007, 2012), and Buber (1947, 1958). Rather than testing and conforming a research hypothesis, constructivist grounded theory uses a process of inductive data collection from the "ground up", "to construct theory about issues of importance in people's lives" (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 2). It is an approach for generating theory that is

> … grounded in and systematically derived from data, with an emphasis on the comparative method of constant concurrent data collection and analysis. The aim is to develop a well grounded theory that describes, explains, interprets and predicts the phenomenon of interest.

> (Jon, 2004, p. 252)

In this study, while data and analysis were collected and performed according to Charmaz's (2006) explication of constructivist grounded theory, the final theory was constructed from the data and enriched by incorporating concepts and knowledge from other educational and social theories. In this important aspect, this study departs from constructivist grounded theory without wandering too far from its foundations; therefore it may be more appropriately described as a qualitative research study that uses constructivist grounded theory principles and methods. However, it appears to be the nature of grounded theory is that it evolves (Charmaz, 2008a; McGhee, Marland,

& Atkinson, 2007). McGhee et al. (2007, p. 341) make an important point when they acknowledge that grounded theory will "undoubtably evolve" but also warn that

> … its methodological boundaries should not be transgressed. Without the inductive and deductive interplay centred on the data offered by participants, the analysis may be inappropriate and not grounded.

Extant literature was used to enrich an understanding of the participants' data and therefore the research retains its "groundedness" but elaborates on the theoretical significance of the data drawing on extant theory. The methodology used also acknowledges the professional experience and understanding of the researcher[21] and his/her role in constructing the reality of the phenomenon being researched (Denzin, 2007). Ultimately, the views of the participants and the final theory are constructions of reality (Charmaz, 2006), a reality that is "multiple, processual, and constructed" (Charmaz, 2008a, p. 402) by both the participants and the researcher.

Constructivist grounded theory has developed from its predecessor, grounded theory which is outlined below. Although grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory share many attributes, these two methodologies particularly diverge in their epistemological underpinning. This difference can be summarised in grounded theory's emphasis on the *discovery* of theory that already exists in the data (a positivist epistemology) compared to constructivist grounded theory's emphasis on theory that is *constructed* from an interpretation of the data (a constructivist epistemology). However, due to constructivist grounded theory's foundational relationship to grounded theory, it is helpful to describe grounded theory prior to discussing the specific attributes of constructivist grounded theory.

3.2 The development of grounded theory

Grounded theory method was originally developed by Glaser and Strauss as an approach for analysing qualitative data and described in their book *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967). It is a methodology that aims to generate or discover a theory that focuses on how individuals interact with the phenomenon being studied (Creswell, 1998). This theory needs to be grounded in data that can be collected through interviews, observations and documents that investigate the actions, interactions and social processes of individuals. SRE teachers, for example, embody

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[21] The professional experience of the researcher will be discussed in section 3.4.1

particular theories about pedagogy in the way they use their teaching resources and their actions in the classroom, and these are reflected in their responses in open-ended interviews. Theories about SRE pedagogy need to be derived from their accounts that reflect their enounced beliefs, practices and experiences.

Although it is more accurate to describe grounded theory as the theory that results from using grounded theory method, it is commonly used to describe both the method and the resulting theory (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Grounded theory offers systematic strategies for qualitative research practice (Charmaz, 2006) and "a solid core of data analysis and theory construction" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 33). Strauss and Corbin (1990, p. 23) define a grounded theory as

> … one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to the phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge.

Therefore, this study did not start with a hypothesis about SRE that needed to be proven although of course, there were questions about SRE teaching that drove the researcher's interest. Instead it starts with collecting data related to the phenomenon of SRE and then analysing this data. It is important to note that in this study, grounded theory methods are used. However, there are times in the analysis where the methodology diverged from the limits of constructivist grounded theory and these are noted in Chapter Four: Analysis and Coding. Principally, there was divergence from grounded theory methodology in the dialogue between theoretical codes emerging from the data analysis and the theoretical work of other writers. For example, Derrida's important work on hospitality enabled a deeper understanding of the theoretical code of Guest and Host. In the subsequent chapters, a theory of SRE pedagogy that resulted from using the grounded theory method is described.

Glaser and Strauss' (1967) discussion of grounded theory overlapped with some key assumptions in positivism because of its "assumptions of an objective, external reality, a neutral observer who discovers data, reductionist inquiry of manageable research problems and objectivist rendering of data" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 250). Theory is understood to be discovered emerge from the data; as such, it is

already there, the researcher just has to find it. In a later development of grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin (1990) moved grounded theory in a post-positivist direction by giving greater voice to participants in the research and seeing theory development through the lens of construction rather than emergence (Charmaz, 2003). However, although there has been a shift from an understanding of the discovery of theory to the construction of theory, there is still a sense that grounded theory is emergent. This is because constructivist grounded theory "begins with the empirical world and builds an inductive understanding of it as events unfold and knowledge accrues" (Charmaz, 2008b, p. 155); and acknowledges that the researcher brings perspectives that will "direct their attention, but not determine their research" (Charmaz, 2008, p. 160). Not only is the theory that is constructed emergent, Charmaz (2008) argues that the methods used are also emergent, and that researchers can "choose or create" (p. 156) methods to deal with issues that arise during the inquiry process.

In this study, the concept of emergence was an important aspect of the analysis. This is because, as Charmaz (2008, p. 157) points out, "emergent methods permit pursuing what researchers *could not* have anticipated". Due to the limited existing research in SRE pedagogy, an emergent method allowed for the unexpected by allowing the data to speak and to direct the analysis. The use of initial and focused coding, the constant comparison of data, memo-writing and the use of extant literature late in the analysis all acknowledge the emergent nature of the methods used in this study. The challenge in emergent research is to let the data speak and not to force ideas and codes onto the data. This is avoided by doing the detailed work of iterative coding and analysis, and only turning to extant literature when this work has been done.

This is in contrast to both Glaser and Strauss' and Strauss and Corbin's early forms of grounded theory that take an objectivist view that works against the existence of influences or biases originating from the researcher's personal experience, previous research or disciplinary background (Bryant, 2003). This is why constructivist grounded theory methods were chosen as more appropriate for this study because of the researcher's existing interest in SRE pedagogy due to her experience as a classroom teacher, an SRE teacher and SRE curriculum writer.

From its original inception, grounded theory quickly became an accepted qualitative research method (Urquhart, 2002) and is "currently the most widely used and popular qualitative researcher method" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 1). This is largely due to the way it provides a qualitative approach to research that both enables the voices of the participants to be heard and acknowledges their expertise. It begins with the interviewees' understandings and, by primarily attending to their views, constructs a theory of the character of their pedagogy. There have been diverging ideas about what exactly grounded theory is, and further development of the method continues to occur (Annells, 1997 ; Charmaz, 2009). This divergence began with a split in ideas between Glaser and Strauss evident in the publishing of Strauss and Corbin's (1990) *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques.* Modifications along a "spiral of methodological development" (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 3) have continued from that time to the point that Dey (2004, p. 80) suggests that "there is no such thing as a "grounded theory" if we mean by that a single, unified methodology, tightly defined and clearly specified".

A helpful way to understand grounded theory is to see it as a family of methods. Bryant and Charmaz (2007) describe three distinct families of grounded theory that exist on a grounded theory continuum: Glaser and Strauss' original grounded theory, Strauss and Corbin's grounded theory (collectively called objectivist grounded theory) and constructivist grounded theory. These families share four assumptions: they are inductive, iterative, emergent and open-ended.

Firstly, all members of the grounded theory family begin with inductive logic; that is, they move from detailed descriptions by studying "a range of individual cases" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 188) to an abstract, conceptual level (Charmaz, 2009). In this study of SRE pedagogy, data was collected from a range of SRE teachers with a variety of experiences of teaching SRE. For example, they teach in rural, suburban and city schools; they have a variety of training backgrounds and professional experience; and they come from a range of Christian denominations. Secondly, all members of the grounded theory family use an iterative process where the researcher returns to the data to test emerging categories or to reinterpret data in the light of subsequent analysis. Rather than sequentially collecting data, analysing data and developing theory, there is simultaneous involvement in data collection, analysis and theory construction. Due to this concurrent nature of collection and analysis, coding

starts with the first collection of data. In this study, data collection occurred between August 2010 and March 2012, and data analysis commenced as soon as the first interview was complete in August 2010. Throughout the data collection process, the ongoing analysis of the data informed and guided subsequent data collection. Thirdly, as an emergent process, analytic codes and categories are constructed from data and not from preconceived or logically deduced hypotheses. For this study, this meant allowing the voices of the SRE teachers to guide how categories were constructed and not imposing the researcher's preconceived notions on the data. This is one of the challenges of using grounded theory methods, because the researcher is not a tabula rasa but a person who comes with ideas and experiences related to the area being studied. Rather than denying these experiences, a researcher needs to reflectively acknowledge them and "subject them to rigorous scrutiny" (Charmaz, 2008a, p. 402). By using the constant comparative method throughout data collection and analysis, the researcher is able to "tease out similarities and differences" (Wiener, 2007, p. 303) to refine developing concepts. In this way, theoretical codes are constructed by exploring preoccupations of the participants that may be voiced explicitly or implicitly, or manifested through repeated use of motifs. For example, in the conceptual category of Truth and Hope, the SRE teachers' descriptions of experiences in the classroom and their future hope for their students, and the repeated use of motifs like *sowing seeds* were important in the construction of the category. Finally, the open ended nature of grounded theory is due to it being inductive, iterative and emergent. As such, it is only through the journey of grounded theory research that the end becomes clear. In this study, the *end* is a unique construction that is directed by ongoing iterative analysis of the data and later engagement with the work of theorists who have explored the emerging themes.

3.3   Constructivist grounded theory

The constructivist grounded theory approach in this study is largely based on Charmaz (2006) who is the "first researcher to describe her work explicitly as constructivist grounded theory" (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 7). In constructivist grounded theory, the tenets of objectivist grounded theory are "reclaimed from their positivist underpinnings to form a revised, more-open ended practice of grounded theory that stresses its emergent, constructivist elements" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 251). Rather than methodological prescriptions that must be carefully followed, constructivist grounded

theory provides a set of principles and practices that consist of systematic, heuristic and flexible guidelines for the collection and analysis of data. As such, constructivist grounded theory is firmly constructivist because it

> … builds on the fluid, interactive, and emergent research process of its originators but seeks to recognise partial knowledge, multiple perspectives, diverse positions, uncertainties, and variation in both empirical experience and its theoretical rendering. (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 51)

Hence, in this study, SRE teacher interviews were chosen as the initial source of data to enable the voices of the participants to be clearly heard. In addition, reflective journals and follow-up interviews further enhanced the depth of the data and the ability to construct a theory of SRE pedagogy. It became evident through coding that the teaching resources available to SRE teachers also needed to be analysed to understand their influence on SRE pedagogy.

The simplest way to understand constructivist grounded theory is to compare the fundamental assumptions of objectivist and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2009). Objectivist and constructivist grounded theory share being inductive, iterative, emergent and open-ended; and are located on opposite ends of a grounded theory continuum (see Diagram 3.1). The major difference lies in constructivist grounded theory's emphasis on

> how data, analysis and *methodological strategies* become constructed, and takes into account the research contexts and researchers' positions, priorities and interactions" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 10, her italics).

Diagram 3.1 indicates the different epistemological foundations of objectivist and constructivist grounded theory.

Diagram 3.1 Grounded Theory Continuum adapted from Charmaz (2009, p. 141)
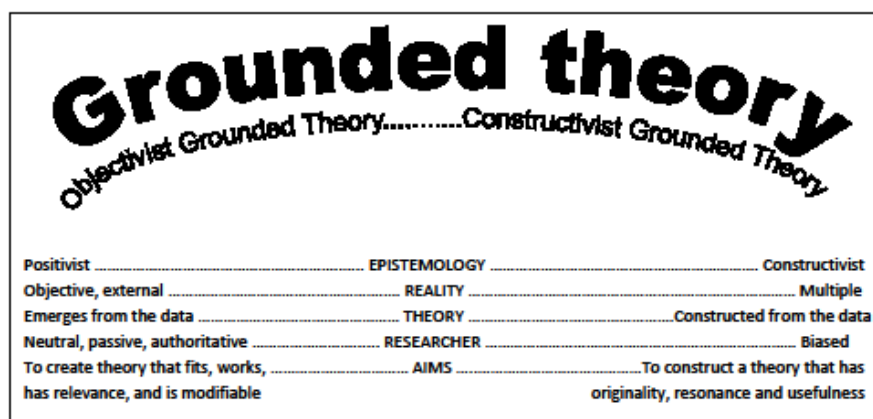
The foundational assumption of reality in constructivist grounded theory (see Diagram 3.1) is drawn from constructivism which acknowledges the "relativism of multiple social realities, recognises the mutual creation of knowledge by the viewer and the viewed, and aims toward interpretive understanding of subjects' meanings" (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). In contrast to objectivist grounded theory that looks at experience from the outside, constructivist grounded theory enters into the experience to "find any assumptions on which participants construct their meanings and actions" (Charmaz, 2009, p. 142). The researcher does this by carefully attending to the language and use of key terms of the participants. For example, participants who are not professional teachers often used the term "control" when describing their classroom management. It was important to listen carefully to what they meant by this term to try to understand how this influenced their pedagogy.

The grounded theory continuum also illustrates a different understanding of data, its relationship to reality, and how theory is derived. Objectivist grounded theory uses the language of discovery, where theory emerges from the data separate from the observer (Charmaz, 2006). However, in constructivist grounded theory, data is understood to be constructed rather than discovered and analyses are "interpretive renderings" rather than objective reports. In constructivist grounded theory neither data nor theories are discovered. We "*construct* our grounded theories through our past and present involvements and interactions with people, perspectives, and research practice" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 10). Constructivism does not seek a single, universal truth (Schwandt, 1994), similarly, constructivist grounded theory does not seek one lasting truth (Charmaz, 2003). Instead, it can only produce "limited, tentative generalisations, not universal statements" (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007, p. 52) that are an image of "*a* reality, not *the* reality – that is, objective, true and external" (Charmaz, 2003, pp. 272-273).

Constructivist grounded theory methods were chosen for this study for five main reasons. Firstly, by emphasising the interplay between the researcher and participants, and the emergence of meaning which is co-constructed and continuously evolving, it fits with the study's epistemological stance that there are multiple, complex and not easily quantifiable realities constructed by individuals and groups within a social phenomenon (Broido & Manning, 2002). Secondly, it was appropriate because there is no existing theory and limited, if any, current research about SRE

pedagogy. Thirdly, a constructivist approach acknowledges both the constructivist nature of teaching and learning where students and teachers work together to construct meaning; and the way that SRE teachers construct their own understanding of teaching. Fourthly, the methodology allows the voices of many different people to be heard so that a theory can be constructed based on the diverse data set. Finally, the researcher is not a neutral observer as she has professional knowledge and experience in SRE teaching that can meaningfully contribute to theory construction. It is important that this knowledge and experience is acknowledged and scrutinised by the researcher from the outset of the research. It is important at this point to note that this study diverges from constructivist grounded theory in its use of extant theories in the development of a framework for the construction of a theory of SRE pedagogy.

3.4   Reflexivity and the researcher

A constructivist view of research acknowledges that the researcher is part of the research process and therefore his/her "positions, privileges, perspectives and interactions" (Charmaz, 2008a, p. 402) affect the process. Neill (2006) points out that reflexivity and reflection are often used interchangeably in the research literature. She differentiates between the two terms by describing reflexivity as the noun that refers to reflective activity in qualitative research, and by describing reflection as the verb. Charmaz (2006) adds to an understanding by describing reflexivity as the "scrutiny of a researcher's experience, decisions, interpretations …that brings the researcher into the process" and a reflective stance informs how the researcher "conducts his or her research, relates to the research participants, and represents them in written reports" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 189). Both recognise the importance for the researcher to be transparent both in what experience s/he brings to the study, and in the decisions and interpretations s/he makes throughout her research journey. Ultimately, such reflexivity allows a reader of the research to assess the extent to which this influenced the study.

Data analysis involves an iterative conversation between the data, the constructed categories and theory, and the researcher. Further into this process, reflexive engagement with key theories and theorists illuminates and deepens understanding of the data. Throughout analysis reflectivity is important for ensuring that categories are "inductively derived from the data in the field and not forced into the shape of preconceived notions held by the researcher" (McGhee et al., 2007, p.

335). Memo writing is an important part of this reflexivity because it provides the researcher with the opportunity to "remember, question, analyse and make meaning of the time spent with participants and the data that were generated together" (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006, p. 11). Memos therefore reflect both the participant's stories and experiences, and the researcher's construction of meaning. Memos are further discussed later in the chapter.

A reflexive statement that explicitly describes any biases, experiences or disciplinary perspectives of the researcher that might impact research (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 1998) is also a valuable component of reflexivity. For this reason, a reflexive statement has been included in this chapter. This reflexive statement is deliberately written in the first person and signifies a movement in this thesis from the third person of the researcher to my first person. As I do this, I pick up on Mills et al (2006b, pp. 11-12) who explain that as a researcher engaged in constructivist qualitative research I can include my own voice and "openly acknowledge [my] own role in authoring a story of the shared experience of meaning-making" and therefore my unavoidable involvement with the voices of the SRE teachers.

3.4.1   My reflexive statement

I have been involved in Christian religious education in churches, Anglican schools and public schools since 1989. In that time I have taught groups ranging from small classes of eight children up to assemblies of three hundred children; and SRE in public schools and Christian Studies in an Anglican school. In addition, I have been an SRE curriculum writer and helped to train teachers. My experiences as well as my studies, a Graduate Diploma of Education and Diploma of Theology, have influenced my attitude to SRE teaching. I believe SRE teaching has a positive and valid place in Australian public schools because it acknowledges the importance of religion in many families' lives, and gives children the opportunity to learn about the beliefs and tenets of one religion taught from a belief perspective.

Two recurring questions have endured over the twenty two years I have been involved in Christian religious education. How do we know if we are doing a good job? And what makes a good teacher and a good program? The impetus for this research occurred during a training session I was running with volunteer teachers. One of the volunteers commented that it did not really matter what was taught, just as long

as the teacher was liked by the students. This started me on the journey of questioning what makes a good teacher and how can s/he support students in their learning. This ultimately, led me to the question of how SRE pedagogy could be understood and to my present study's attempt to consider the different dimension of SRE pedagogy.

The 2010 debate in the state of New South Wales on whether to allow ethics classes to be taught during SRE time in New South Wales public schools, led to a plethora of letters to the editor in the Sydney Morning Herald. One letter caught my attention because in many ways it summed up my concerns about SRE teaching:

> [Special] Religious education should, if well presented, have everything going for it: fascinating stories, inspiring principles, a promise of salvation which, if you accept its validity, is the best news for mankind ever told…but because of the way it is taught, Scripture has always had the reputation among children of being the most boring lesson of the week.
> (Blair, 2010)

SRE teaching is challenging; sometimes it is very difficult. SRE teachers often have little experience and may not have either education or theological training. They only see their students for between thirty and sixty minutes each week, are not employed by the school and are therefore always visitors. There is often little collegial interaction and consequently it can be a lonely endeavour. Some weeks I love SRE teaching, other weeks I loathe it. As I reflect on my teaching and my students I am driven to read and think more, as I search for better ways to teach and engage the children. In addition, I try to honestly encourage and enthuse other teachers and potential teachers as they teach or consider teaching SRE.

The concept of pedagogy has also intrigued me for some time. The first time I heard the word was at a presentation in a school staff development day in 2003. I did not know what it meant, but as everyone else seemed to know what the presenter was talking about I kept quiet about my lack of knowledge. Subsequently I realised that many teachers shared my ignorance or, at a minimum, did not agree on what pedagogy meant. I realised that pedagogy was important, but was unsure what exactly it was describing. My reading has supported this initial reaction to pedagogy and has encouraged me to define and understand its particular place in understanding SRE teaching and learning.

Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006b) point out that it is a researcher's interest in a research area that is likely to provide the necessary passion and sustainability for research to occur. This interest coupled with any background assumptions and knowledge of extant literature will "influence what [he or she] *can* see" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 15). As such, in constructivist grounded theory the researcher is not a hidden, neutral observer. Instead it is my experience and background that motivates me to ask questions about SRE pedagogy. I am compelled to continue reading, thinking and reflecting to understand SRE pedagogy and improve what happens in my and other SRE classrooms. With this in mind, my experience, professional training and reading of relevant literature has been woven together to form the starting point for this study; and constructivist grounded theory provides appropriate starting points for hearing the voices of the SRE teachers to understand SRE pedagogy.

However, it is important to note that being reflective is not a matter of simply describing my experience and theoretical position; it is an ongoing issue to be wrestled with throughout data collection, coding and exploration of extant literature. The detailed, iterative work of moving between data and coding, codes and codes, codes and theorists must be done diligently to ensure that I do not force my views onto the developing theory. This is a dialogic process that is achieved by constantly listening to the participants' voices and memo writing. An excellent example of this dialogue between data, memos and my experience is in the construction of the conceptual category of Vulnerability and Authority. During focused coding, issues of control emerged from the data. The SRE teachers described times when on one hand they struggled with controlling their classes, their lack of control because of their status in the schools, and a perception by some students of their lack of control; and yet there also seemed to be a desire to control what was happening by the use of power. I grappled with power and control as two motifs and spent time reading extant literature that explored power in the classroom. However, as I returned to the data and listened more carefully, it became clear to me that I was forcing my ideas onto the data. I was painting the teachers in a harsh light, where they wanted to exert their power on the students that did not mesh with the data. To have pursued this agenda would have meant forcing the data into a place where it did not belong, and it was through a reflective stance that I was able to identify this.

3.5   Research Methods

While methodology encapsulates the overall research approach, "the *method* refers to systematic modes, procedures or tools used for collection and analysis of data" (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, p. 198). Research methods are the practical activities of research that help the researcher to "see the world as our research participants do – from the inside" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). In this section I provide an overview of what research methods are; describe the selection of participants, research scope and data collection. Chapter Four provides a more detailed description of sampling, data collection, data management, data analysis, and reporting.

As an emergent methodology, grounded theory emphasises the importance of the data rather than any preconceived hypothesis (Neal, 2009). Data collection flows from the research question and is constructed through gathered observations, interactions and materials about the topic or setting (Charmaz, 2006). For Glaser and Strauss (1967) all is data. However, Charmaz (2006) points out that data vary in quality, relevance for emerging ideas and usefulness. Rich data can be drawn from multiple sources such as observations, conversations, formal interviews, autobiographies, public records, organisation reports, diaries and journals, our own recorded reflections (Charmaz, 2003). However, these methods are tools and it is important to have "a keen eye, open mind, discerning ear, and steady hand …[to] bring you close to what you study" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 14). That is, while the collection of data is guided by the research question, the researcher must allow the data to take him/her to unanticipated places of understanding that may be beyond the realm of the initial questions asked. These unanticipated places can be found in the theoretical constructs that emerge during close attention to the voices of those interviewed, to the dialogues that they engage in, and attention to related categories explored by theorists who have wandered into the same territory. Thornberg (2011, p. 253) helpfully points out that

> extant theoretical concepts and ideas from literature in the substantive field have to earn their way into a grounded theory … They have to make sense to and fit with data and substantive codes and concepts.

The journey into understanding may begin with grounded theory but end in a wisdom that could be explored metaphorically, in concert with others.

Doing constructivist grounded theory is reminiscent of an amazing road trip my family went on from Texas to California in the United States in 2009. We knew our starting point and our final destination, but the details of the actual journey emerged as we travelled. Our road map and the people we met along the way provided us with opportunities and challenges as we clocked up 9700 kilometres. It is a journey I look back on with joy, and forward with excitement at possible journeys in the future. This is also my experience of constructivist grounded theory. I knew my starting point and I knew that I wanted to end up with an understanding of SRE pedagogy, and the research methods provided me with a road map to follow. Like any journey, there were many opportunities for false starts and meandering country lanes. There were times when I had to speed past things of interest but not importance. There were people I spoke to and learned from, but there are many others that I was not able to spend time with. As I continued my journey, I discovered that the methods were only the first road map. The second map was the data. It was the data and its analysis that determined where the journey would go. Ultimately, it was the analysis of the data that led to the construction of a theory of SRE pedagogy, my final destination.

In the journey of constructivist grounded theory, data collection and analysis happen concurrently using a constant comparative approach. This allows for new ideas regarding data collection to be constructed from the data. However, for clarity these aspects will be discussed separately. The selection of participants and research scope will be described first, followed by a discussion of data collection methods. Coding and data analysis will be discussed in chapter four.

3.5.1 Selection of participants, research scope and data collection

The participants in this study are a heterogeneous group of people whose commonality is their Christian belief and their experience as SRE teachers. As a group, they:

- have an average of nine years' experience and have taught SRE for between one and forty three years;
- have a range of relevant education - four have education qualifications, seven have theology qualifications, five have education and theology qualifications, and seven have no relevant qualifications;

- teach between one and twelve classes a week;

- teach classes with between four and seventy students;

- teach single year classes, multiage classes of two or three years, and Kindergarten to year 6 classes;

- teach in cities, regional towns and rural towns;

- use one of four commercially produced SRE teaching programs or develop their own programs;

- are employed to teach - seven teachers, or are volunteers - sixteen teachers;

- are female - eighteen teachers, or male – five teachers;

- are affiliated with Anglican, Baptist, Pentecostal, Protestant and Roman Catholic churches; and

- teach a total of sixty eight classes.

Table 3.1 summarises the details of each participant. Their names have been changed to ensure anonymity.

Table 3.1 Details of participants

Age & gender (M/F)	Years of SRE	Tertiary training	Classes (students)	Participant's school description (number of students)	Teaching resource	V. or E.*
Alicia F 56-65	23	Theology Education	Year 5 (20, 25)	Suburban, predominantly Anglo, significant number of other cultures, middle to upper class (620)	Access	V
Avril F 56-65	19	-	Kindergarten Year 2		Access	V
Bart M 46-55	2	Education Theology	Year 6 (17, 18, 33)	City fringe (i) Suburban (650) (ii) Aspirational (450) (iii) Blue collar (320)	Connect	E
Beth F 46-55	20	Education	2x kindergarten, 1 x K-3, 3 x year 1/2, 2 x year 2/3, 3 x year 3, 1 x year 5/6	1. Suburban, low socio-economic, 500 students 2. Suburban, affluent, 500 students 3. Rural, 34 students	Access	V
Cathy F 26-35	3	Theology	Year 5	Suburban	Connect	E
Daniel M 56-65	9	Theology	Year 3/4 (20), Year 5/6 (20)	Small rural school	Connect	V
Eleanor F 46-55	11	-	3 x year 6 (25, 25, 25)	Suburban, affluent, Multicultural (600)	Access	V
Elissa F 18-25	1.5	Theology	Kindergarten (15), Year 6 (20)	Suburban, middle class, mainly Anglo (350)	Godspace and create own lessons	E
Jane F 56-65	8	Theology Children's ministry	Kindergarten (20), Year 3 (17)	Suburban, affluent, multicultural (500)	Connect	E

Table 3.2 continued Details of participants

Age & gender (M/F)	Years of SRE	Tertiary training	Classes (students)	Participant's school description (number of students)	Teaching resource	V. or E.*
John M 46-55	15	Theology	Year 3-6 (5), Year 5/6 (4)	Inner city: gentrified (300) public housing (80)	Create own	E
Joshua M 91	29	-	Year 6	Suburban, upper middle class	Access	V
Julia F 46-55	5	-	Year 3/4, Year 5/6	Rural school	Connect	V
Lisa F 26-35	4	Theology, studying education	Year 4/5/6 (34)	Suburban, middle class, mainly Anglo (350)	Godspace	V
Mary F 66+ (81)	43	Theology	K-6 (30)	City suburban, affluent (300)	CCD	V
Michelle F 56-65	5	Education	Years 5/6 (70)	Coastal town, new housing development (1500)	Modified Access	E
Nerida F 26-35	2	Education	Kindergarten (34)	City suburban, affluent (400)	Godspace	V
Nicole F 46-55	22	-	kindergarten (17,19), Year 4/5, (23), Year 5/6 (40,37,20)	Rural (140), Suburban (190), Suburban (280)	Access	V
Patricia F 18-25	1.5	Education	Year 5/6 (25), Year 5 (10)	Suburban, upper middle class (500, 800)	Access	V
Pearl F 36-45	5	-	3 year 3 (22, 21 22)	City suburban, lower middle class (450)	Access	V
Renee F 46-55	10	-	6 classes	City fringe Working to middle class	Create own	V
Ruby F 26-35	1	Theology	K-6 (30, 30), K-2 (20, 25), Years 3-6 (20, 20), K-6 (30)	4 city suburban schools, affluent and public housing (200, 600, 200, 300)	Create own	E
Shirley F 56-65	1	Education Theology	Kindergarten (24), Year 4 (18)	Suburban, affluent, multicultural, (500)	Connect	V
Stephen M 36-45	6	Theology	K-2, year 4, year 5, year 6	City fringe, middle class	Connect and create own	E

*V. or E. – Volunteer or employed

Convenience sampling, where participants are chosen on the basis of accessibility, was initially used to locate "expert" participants. Initially, two kinds of participants were chosen to participate in the study: SRE stakeholders and teachers. Firstly, I interviewed people who were SRE stakeholders who worked for, or had previously worked for SRE Providers. These people had expertise in SRE teaching but were not teaching. They included two curriculum writers, two trainers, three managers, and a retired man who had previously worked in SRE advocacy, and training and support of SRE teachers for fifty years. As I analysed the data from the stakeholder interviews it became clear to me that this was not the data that I was looking for because they were viewing SRE pedagogy from a theoretical rather than grounded, personal perspective.

I wanted to hear the voices of the SRE teachers who were teaching in the classroom with their students on a weekly basis. I hoped these SRE teachers would provide insight into the complexity of SRE because of their "on the ground" experiences of SRE. In contrast, the "professionals" spoke from an idealised, secondary stance resulting in an idealised account of SRE. Consequently, the data collected from the SRE stakeholders provided helpful background understanding, but it was subordinate to the more pertinent voices of the teachers.

Initially I interviewed four friends who were SRE teachers. This helped me to develop both my interviewing skills and my questions in a supportive environment. As I explained my research to other SRE teaching friends and colleagues I was amazed by their interest and willingness to be involved in the study. However, it was important to move beyond collecting data from people I knew to ensure that my data was not skewed to like-minded SRE teachers and to increase the heterogeneity of the population by striving for maximum variation in the sample (Maxwell, 2005). This move was important because grounded theory needs to "incorporate and account for the maximum variety of meanings and behaviours" (Milliken & Schreiber, 2001, p. 184) in the area being studied.

Information about my study was given to potential participants by ACCESS Ministries and colleagues in Victoria, and friends in New South Wales. These potential participants were then able to contact me if they were interested. When they contacted me I explained the study in detail and asked them to describe their SRE teaching situation. I organised to meet with them if they wanted to continue, and if I felt that they provided variation in age, experience, training or religious denominational affiliation. As such, sampling became purposive and participants were identified who represented a range of experience and expertise in SRE teaching: teachers from their first year of SRE teaching to over forty years of teaching experience; male and female teachers; teachers aged from twenty two years to ninety one years; teachers with formal education and/or theology qualifications and teachers with neither qualifications; and teachers from schools of different sizes in Sydney, Melbourne, Geelong and Grafton.

As data collection continued, sampling was directed by two main issues. Firstly, the themes and categories that were emerging from my data analysis directed

my sampling. As my understanding of the data deepened, there were areas that I wanted to find out more about and I chose participants who could further my understanding of these themes and categories. For example, I found four of the teacher interviews challenging because these participants gave short answers and did not share their experiences with any depth. Consequently, the data from these interviews lacked richness and was often mundane or irrelevant; and I chose not to ask these participants to do a second interview or complete reflective journals. Secondly, there were some practical constraints. For example, three of the participants who were asked to keep reflective journals chose not to, and one participant's situation changed and she could no longer be involved in the study.
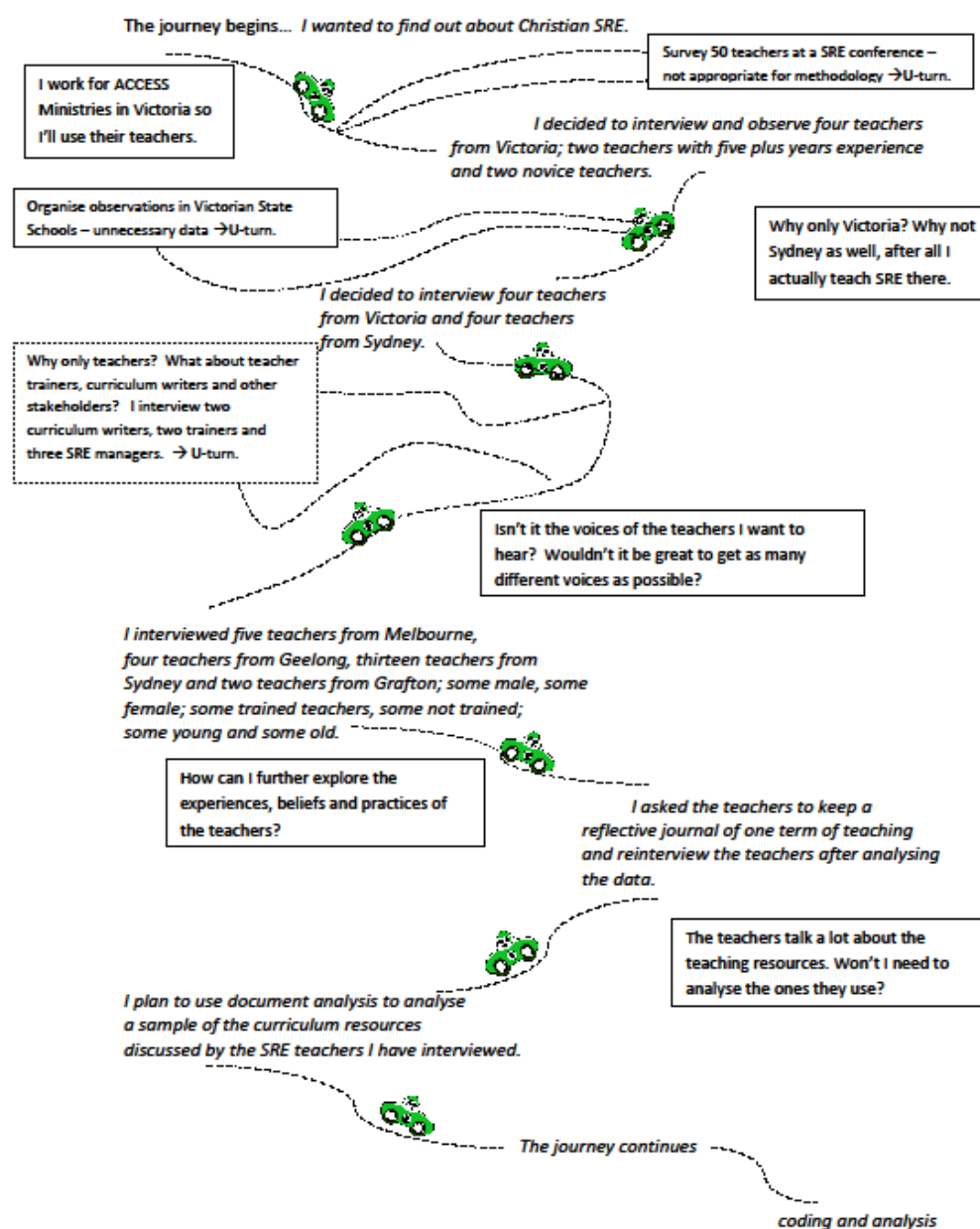
The scope of the study is limited to Christian SRE in primary schools. Although SRE is taught in most states of Australia, the study was carried out in Victoria and New South Wales. This was for three reasons: (i) SRE is well established in Victoria and New South Wales; (ii) these states have the largest number of SRE teachers in Australia due to them being the most populous states in Australia[22]; and (iii) because of my existing relationship in Victoria with ACCESS Ministries, and my long term involvement in SRE teaching in Sydney. Data collection took place between August 2010 and December 2011. Determining the research scope and participants is an excellent example of the emergent nature of constructivist grounded theory.

Diagram 3.2 (over the page) uses my earlier journey metaphor to illustrate the emergent nature of constructivist grounded methods and its impact on my research. That is, decisions about the sample of participants and how data is collected changes as data is analysed. Initially I surveyed 50 teachers at an SRE teachers' conference in Victoria. However, as I discussed these surveys with my supervisor I realised that the method I had used was inappropriate for a qualitative research project. As a result, I chose not to include this data in my analysis. In addition, I decided to observe four teachers as they taught SRE but as I explored how I would approach these observations I realised that I was at risk of imposing an understanding of pedagogy onto the observations. In effect, I was concerned that I would have forced my beliefs

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[22] Total population of Australia = 23.032 million; Victoria = 5.713 million (24% of Australia's population); New South Wales = 7.381 million (32%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, March 2013 demographic statistics).

Diagram 3.2 Exploring SRE Pedagogy: the journey begins

The journey begins… *I wanted to find out about Christian SRE.*

Survey 50 teachers at a SRE conference – not appropriate for methodology →U-turn.

I work for ACCESS Ministries in Victoria so I'll use their teachers.

I decided to interview and observe four teachers from Victoria; two teachers with five plus years experience and two novice teachers.

Organise observations in Victorian State Schools – unnecessary data →U-turn.

Why only Victoria? Why not Sydney as well, after all I actually teach SRE there.

I decided to interview four teachers from Victoria and four teachers from Sydney.

Why only teachers? What about teacher trainers, curriculum writers and other stakeholders? I interview two curriculum writers, two trainers and three SRE managers. → U-turn.

Isn't it the voices of the teachers I want to hear? Wouldn't it be great to get as many different voices as possible?

I interviewed five teachers from Melbourne, four teachers from Geelong, thirteen teachers from Sydney and two teachers from Grafton; some male, some female; some trained teachers, some not trained; some young and some old.

How can I further explore the experiences, beliefs and practices of the teachers?

I asked the teachers to keep a reflective journal of one term of teaching and reinterview the teachers after analysing the data.

The teachers talk a lot about the teaching resources. Won't I need to analyse the ones they use?

I plan to use document analysis to analyse a sample of the curriculum resources discussed by the SRE teachers I have interviewed.

The journey continues

coding and analysis

onto the data, a warning made by many grounded theory researchers (for example, Thornberg (2011) and Charmaz (2006)) and a move from grounded theory methods that I was not willing to take. These observations never took place. I did however interview teacher trainers, curriculum writers and other stakeholders. However, I

chose not to code or analyse these interviews because I determined that it was the SRE teachers' voices I wanted to hear in my research. The emergent nature of data

collection also influenced the choice of participants. Although the original intention was to collect data only from Victoria, I broadened data collection to include New South Wales early on in the research and decided to include reflective journals in the data collection.

3.5.2   Data collection

There were two data collection methods used in the study: interviews and reflective journals; and three sources of data: participant interviews, reflective journals, and the Teacher and Student Books. These data collection methods and sources of data were used to gain rich data that captured the contextual complexity of SRE pedagogy. Broadly speaking, the interviews gave participants the opportunity to share their stories, experiences and understanding of SRE pedagogy. Similarly, the reflective journals provided a view into the classroom by capturing the participants' teaching experience. Finally, as the majority of participants rely on the guidance of the Teacher and Student Books to teach their classes, analysing these documents provided further insight into SRE pedagogy. Ultimately, using these three sources of data helped to elaborate and refine categories in the emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006). Table 3.2 summarises the timing of the data collection.

Table 3.2 Timing of Data Collection

Data Source	Participants	When
Interviews	7 SRE stakeholders in Victoria and NSW	August 2010 to January 2011
Interview 1	23 SRE teachers in Victoria and NSW	Between August 2010 and May 2012
Journals	16 teachers in Victoria and NSW	10 lessons in terms 2 and 3, 2011 (April to September)
Interview 2	16 teachers who kept the journals	July 2011 to March 2012
Document analysis	ACCESS Ministries, Youthworks, Broken Bay CCD, Baptist Ministries Teacher Books	2013

3.5.2.1   *Interviews*

Interviews are an "invitation to recall, reveal and construct aspects of subjective experiences and interpretations" (Minichiello, Madison, Hays, & Parmenter, 2004, p. 413) that provide an opportunity for "active interactions between two people leading to results that are both mutually negotiated and contextual." (Mills et al., 2006a, p. 9). As such they are a significant component of data collection in the study because they enabled the voices of SRE teachers to be heard. Two main groups of people were

interviewed: SRE stakeholders and SRE teachers. SRE stakeholders were people employed by ACCESS Ministries, Youthworks or Broken Bay CCD as writers, trainers or managers. The teachers were SRE teachers from NSW and Victoria. The people who were interviewed have been called participants rather than subjects or informants. An informant is someone who "informs the interviewer on issues about which s/he has limited knowledge" (Minichiello et al., 2004, p. 412). However, as the people in this research were participating in the construction of knowledge and I have experience as an SRE teacher and writer, participant was a more appropriate term. As participants, their answers to questions often took the interview in unexpected directions as we explored their expressed ideas. In this way the interviews were what Charmaz (2006, p. 28) describes as "open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted".

As noted in Diagram 3.1, SRE stakeholders were interviewed early in the data collection process. These interviews helped to create a broad understanding of both the expectations of each of these SRE Providers and their beliefs about SRE pedagogy. These were also important as the organisations they represent provide resources used by SRE teachers that influence their pedagogy. The SRE stakeholders' interviews provided a professional, meta-view of SRE teaching. They spoke in the third person about teaching, for example, one SRE stakeholder explained in his interview that "They [SRE teachers] are to be a role model, they are to be a leader". The SRE stakeholders also referred to their roles as trainers, curriculum providers and trouble shooters, rather than their own experiences in the classroom. For example, one SRE stakeholder discussed what to do when an SRE teacher does something inappropriate in the classroom. However, it was the interviews with the SRE teachers that resulted in a rich set of data due to what Charmaz (2006, p. 29) describes as their "substantial experience, often combined with considerable insight". The SRE teachers spoke about their personal experiences in the classroom and provided the "ground up" data that is appropriate for this study.

Interviews are "not neutral, context-free tools for data collection" (Mills et al., 2006b, p. 9); rather, the constructivist nature of this study necessitated a relationship with the participants where they were able to tell their stories on their terms. This was achieved by careful planning prior to the interview, listening with openness to their feelings and experiences, and spending time reflecting on the interview. To ensure

that participants were sharing in the construction of knowledge, it was important that interviews were scheduled at a time and location of their choice; that some personal details were shared and any participant questions were answered. In addition, prior to the interview, participants were given a letter introducing the research and explaining their part in it. Permission to audio-record each interview was sought and consent forms were signed. Participants were also given the option of having their interview transcripts emailed back to them for verification.

The interviews were semi-structured and conducted face-to-face[23]. Semi-structured interviews were chosen because they "provide the best opportunity to find out what someone else thinks or feels" (Bouma & Ling, 2004, p. 177). A question guide was developed prior to the interviews. This helped to both focus the content of the interviews and maintain some continuity between interviews (Minichiello et al., 2004). The question guide reflected the constructivist emphasis on the participant's views and experiences. The questions were developed to encourage "unanticipated statements and stories to emerge" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 26). In contrast to a casual conversation, the questions aimed to go beneath the surface to examine the events, opinions and feelings of the SRE teachers (Charmaz, 2006). However, it was not intended that all the questions would be used; rather they provided a starting point for the interview (Charmaz, 2006) because it was important to allow the conversation to follow its own route (Birks & Mills, 2011, p. 75). There were many times that I did not move beyond initial questions such as: (i) why did you start teaching SRE? (ii) Tell me about an SRE class that you thought went really well, and (iii) Describe a time when you felt like giving up teaching SRE. This was because the participants guided the interview with their early responses. A copy of the list of possible questions is in Appendix 3.1.

In keeping with constructivist grounded theory, the interview questions were continually reviewed and modified. This happened both within individual interviews and between interviews. As an interview progressed, questions were developed in response to a participant's answer. For example, in Brad's interview he was explaining how he likes to engage the students using "activities where I can get a subset of kids out [the front]". I wanted Brad to flesh this out a bit and asked him:

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[23] One interview was done on the phone because a participant had to attend a funeral at the last minute and we couldn't reschedule. The second interview with this participant was done in person.

"Tell me some of the things you do to do that?" Some of these new questions were then added to the list of questions to be used in other interviews. In addition, after the teachers completed their journal, second interviews were organised. Two kinds of questions were developed for these interviews. Firstly, there were questions that arose from analysing the interviews that I asked all the participants. For example, as many participants in the first interview talked about their sense of being called to teach SRE, I included a question about the importance of calling in teaching SRE. Secondly, there were questions arising from analysis of individual interviews and journals that I asked specific participants. For example, in her first interview, Beth said: "I do bind up stuff, I believe that the Lord has given us that we can bind up deception or hurts and ask forgiveness for them". Although I did not understand what she meant, I had not pursued this in the first interview. I returned to this in the second interview and asked her to explain what she meant and to describe how it is important in her teaching. These two kinds of questions resulted in individualised question guides and a more varied interview schedule in the second interview. As an example, Eleanor's individualised question guide is in Appendix 3.2.

3.5.2.2   *Reflective journals*

Solicited reflective journals[24] were also an important source of data in this study. Unlike personal journals, solicited journals are specifically requested by the researcher and are written with the full understanding that the text will be used for research purposes (Bijoux & Myers, 2006; Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). They enable the participant to "reflect on, vent emotions about, and make sense of their experiences" (Furness & Garrud, 2010, p. 264), and are particularly valuable when it is not possible to observe participants over an extended period of time (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). Although the journals may lack "nuances present in verbal communication" (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005, p. 991) they add depth to the interview data.

Solicited journals are in keeping with the constructivist nature of the research. While both the researcher and the participants are involved in constructing knowledge from them, they give voice to the participants' experiences and opinions and give the researcher a "view from within" (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005, p. 992). Although the researcher initially provides a clear framework to guide the reflections, the

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[24] There are two basic kinds of journals or diaries used in qualitative research: personal private journals and solicited journals (Meth, 2003).

participants retain control over what they write in their journals as they construct and tell their stories (Furness & Garrud, 2010). Ultimately, the researcher chooses what aspects of the journals are included or excluded in the final account (Bijoux & Myers, 2006).

Sixteen of the twenty four participants were asked to keep a reflective journal for eight weeks of SRE teaching. At the beginning of each week, the same eight questions to be answered after teaching a lesson were emailed to participants. The questions were:

- What preparation did you do for the lesson?
- How did you feel about the lesson and your teaching?
- What worked well in the lesson?
- What were the challenges in the lesson?
- How did the students respond to the lesson?
- What things did you see today that helped you to know that the students were learning?
- What would you change if you taught this lesson again?
- Any other comments?

The journal entries provided snapshots of teaching moments that complemented the interview data and provided ideas for questions for the second interviews. Writing journal entries provided participants with the opportunity to reflect on and describe their experiences close to the time when they taught SRE. By providing a window into the participants' pedagogical thoughts and actions, they added richness to the data and added detail to the emerging picture of SRE pedagogy.

Several limitations of journals have been noted in the literature. Most significant is the time it takes to keep a journal (Bijoux & Myers, 2006; Furness & Garrud, 2010; Green, Rafaeli, Bolger, Shrout, & Reis, 2006; Jacelon & Imperio, 2005). The questions in the journal were kept to a minimum to reduce the time needed to complete an entry. Participants were also assured that they could write as little or as much as they chose, and that they did not have to complete the journal if they did not want to. Unfortunately, this resulted in some very short journal entries that, although

providing some insight, lacked richness. For example, Table 3.3 gives an example of the answers to the question 'What preparation did you do for the lesson?' given by four different teachers. This illustrates the variation that was found in all answers to the journal questions, that moves from Joshua's succinct response to Alicia's detailed explanation of her preparation.

Table 3.3 SRE Lesson Journal: What preparation did you do for the lesson?

SRE teacher	Journal entry
Nerida	Read the Launch lesson and then used it as a basis to make up my own lesson. Also read the Bible passage. Prayed for a short while. I typed up a short lesson plan and actually, the best thing about that was the list of resources I wrote at the end. It all went a bit haywire and having that list of resources kind of saved the day as by the time I was leaving with two sleeping children in the pouring rain, my brain had left the building! So that list was great!
Jane	Prayer for engaging with class teacher - prickly yet can be supportive. Re-read the story of Ruth. Prepared my Family Tree page and visual time-line of Jesus' FamilyTree.
Alicia	I read the Scripture passages and the curriculum, noting where this story fitted in a unit of work on Caleb, Nehemiah and these women from an earlier time – Old Testament people of faith who exercised faith in hard times. Checked back on how I taught this lesson 3 years ago. As it was the last scheduled lesson of Semester 1, which I was now teaching in Week 1 of Semester 2, I decided to spend a good part of the lesson recapping with the children some of the concepts we had discussed in Semester 1. Prepared the 'summary statements' as a printed bookmark for each child and as a child read each one, they hunted through the book to find the page, or a page, to which that statement referred, then gave a brief summary to the class. The last 'summary' (*We can speak up for vulnerable people*) referred to this new lesson about the women who petitioned Moses to change a law that disadvantaged them and their family. I used the cartoon in their workbooks to elicit the storyline.
Joshua	The usual time of one hour plus.

Green et al (2006) also note that participants need to have certain abilities to complete journals; they need a level of literacy and the physical capacity. In this study, the literacy levels and physical capacity to teach SRE were similar to those needed to complete the journals so this was not considered to be an issue. In addition, as the journals were sent by email it was important that the teachers had access to the internet. All teachers in the research had access, so again this was not an issue.

There was the chance that participants would become demotivated and fatigued (Furness & Garrud, 2010) and not complete their journals. There was also the potential problem of backfilling, where participants make up forgotten entries when

they are next completing their journals (Green et al., 2006). These issues were minimised, but not eradicated, by emailing the journal questions at the beginning of each week and encouraging participants to return their journal entries on a weekly basis. Although this acted as a gentle reminder to participants it did not result in all journal entries being returned. On three occasions I received two or three journal entries at once. For example, one participant noted, "Please find my evaluations attached for three weeks ago. Sorry for the delay. It's been a hectic couple of weeks". Only six of the sixteen participants completed all eight journal entries, and seven participants completed four or less journal entries. This may have been due to lack of motivation; however, it was also clear that very few teachers actually taught for eight weeks in a row. This was due to SRE teachers being sick or on holidays, and classes that were cancelled due to a teachers' strike, concert rehearsals, or school excursions. I considered asking teachers to continue until they had completed eight journal entries but decided that this inconsistency in the journals was a reflection of how SRE teaching can be inconsistent due to conflicting school activities and timetabling, and the inability of volunteers to always attend SRE. The missed weeks were therefore a significant piece of data for the study.

Another significant limitation of journals is that regular reflection may alter the participant's SRE teaching. It is important to be aware that by encouraging reflection, journal keeping can "impact on thoughts, feelings, and behaviour, effectively altering what might otherwise have occurred" (Furness & Garrud, 2010, p. 264). For example, when asked the question: *What things did you see today that helped you to know that the students were learning?* one participant commented in her fourth journal entry that:

> I have found this question increasingly disturbing and challenging as there are few opportunities in a thirty minute lesson for the SRE teacher to assess how students are learning, except by active participation and genuine questions raised.

It is interesting to note that her answer reflects how the context of SRE can shape and constrain an SRE teacher's pedagogy. She points out that due to the length of time she has with her students it is difficult to assess whether they are learning. The participant's second interview acknowledged the influence of regular reflection and asked participants to reflect on whether keeping the journal influenced their teaching.

Constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the ongoing construction of reality for participants and researchers. This reflection is part of that construction.

It was anticipated that the journals would provide insight into the participants' pedagogical thoughts and actions. I was initially disappointed in the journal entries because they were often short, objective accounts of the participants' teaching. However, as I returned to the journals after some distance from my first coding and with a developing understanding of SRE pedagogy I found phrases that were subtle references to the particularity of SRE pedagogy. For example, in one journal entry when Shirley is describing the external factors that helped her teaching, she says

> … the offer of a gumdrop at the end of my lesson from the [classroom] teacher gave me a boost. The children arrived early from the other classrooms.

The gumdrop offer is surprising because often SRE teachers recount their negative experiences of the classroom teacher. The gumdrop represents a small, yet significant variance from these experiences. Similarly, most SRE teachers describe how their time is limited in the classroom. One of the contributing factors is the students' tardy arrival. This journal entry may agree with this experience; that is, it is so unusual that the children arrive early that Shirley chooses to mention it in her journal. In this way, the journal entries ultimately added richness to the data and added detail to the emerging picture of SRE pedagogy.

3.6   Research quality - trustworthiness

One of the challenges of qualitative research is to assure its quality. Positivist research assures quality by considering the rigour, "the thoroughness, accuracy, confirmability and ethical soundness of all aspects" (Andrew & Halcomb, 2009, p. xvi) of the research. This is demonstrated through internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Validity determines whether a study's findings are "accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the reader" (Creswell, 2003, pp. 195-196). It was first divided into internal and external validity by D. T. Campbell, Stanley, and Gage (1963). Internal validity refers to the capacity of the study to "accurately identify the cause-effect relationship operating in the study" (Hall, 2008, p. 18), and internal validity refers to the generalisability to other studies. Reliability and objectivity refers to a study's ability to produce consistent and repeatable results. However, because constructivist

grounded theory represents lives and events through "a process of constructing others' constructions of the constructions of the world" (Talburt, 2004, p. 103) the objective measurement and analysis of cause-effect relationships between variables is inappropriate for evaluating research quality (Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Horsburgh, 2003; Lietz, Langer, & Furman, 2006).

Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest trustworthiness as a more appropriate criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research. They state that the basic issue of trustworthiness is simple: How does a study persuade its audience "that the findings of an inquiry are worth paying attention to, [and] worth taking account of" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290). This persuasion requires clear descriptions and explanations of the procedures used to generate the findings (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). Such clarity and transparency allows the reader to understand how the data was analysed and theory constructed. This is important because ultimately, research is trustworthy 'if and only if the reader of the research report judges it to be so' (Rolfe, 2006, p. 105). Such trustworthiness can be demonstrated through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1989).

An important aspect of demonstrating trustworthiness in this study was the use of constructed conversations. Constructed conversations are imagined conversations between study participants who in reality have not met each other. They are a literary device that draws together the data from all participants in the study. Wherever possible in these conversations, the words of the participants are used verbatim as they "discuss" with each other the concept being explored in the study. The construction of the teachers' data into conversations between the teachers was an important analytical bridge that helped to make sense of the data and is discussed more fully in Chapter Four. While they primarily provide a way of both analysing and presenting the data, they also help to demonstrate trustworthiness as will be discussed in the following sections.

3.6.1   Credibility

Credibility refers to the value and believability of the findings of a study (Paterson & Higgs, 2005). It is achieved by ensuring that the research methods are suitable for the chosen methodology and by providing enough detail for a reader to assess its credibility. It is also demonstrated through strategies including member

checking, triangulation, thick description, peer reviews and external audits (Tobin & Begley, 2004) and is defined by Creswell and Miller (2000, p. 124) as "how accurately the account represents participants' realities of the social phenomena and is credible to them".

Creswell and Miller (2000) describe three lenses that can be looked through to determine the credibility of research: the lens of the researcher, the lens of the participant, and the lens of people external to the study. Firstly, using a researcher lens, semi-structured interviews and journal entries helped me to gain an authentic understanding of the participants' experiences (Paterson & Higgs, 2005) and allowed their voices to be heard. Throughout analysis, I continued to return to the data to find evidence to confirm or disconfirm the categories and theory to assure credibility. Secondly, using a participant lens, I used member checking to assure credibility. Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 314) describe member checking as the "most crucial technique for establishing credibility" in research. It is achieved by taking the data and interpretations back to the research participants so that they can confirm the credibility of the research. Rolfe (2006) and Sandelowski (1993) disagree with Lincoln and Guba's (1985) emphasis on the importance of member checks. They argue that if reality is understood to be multiple and constructed, then it is unlikely that other researchers or participants will necessarily arrive at the same themes and categories because "there will inevitably be differences in their philosophical and theoretical commitments and styles" (Sandelowski, 1993, p. 3). Guba and Lincoln (1994) address this criticism in their more recent writing when they explain that the best way to check credibility is to verify the multiple constructions with the participants. This provides the participants the opportunity to both correct errors and offer additional ideas. In my research I gave my participants the opportunity to read their transcribed interviews, the constructed conversations[25] and theory, and to provide feedback. Thirdly, I used the lens of people external to the study by asking SRE teachers and teacher trainers who were not participants in the study, as well as two people involved in religious education, to read and comment on my analysis. I also found that when SRE teachers outside of the study casually asked about my research and I explained what I am finding they always agree with my descriptions

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[25] These constructed conversations are an integral part of the analysis and are discussed in Chapter Four.

and provided additional examples from their own experiences. There were often moments of clearer understanding for these SRE teachers as the research puts a name to what they have been experiencing. In this way, I have been pleased to discover that my findings resonated strongly with their experience.

Credibility is also established by describing the setting, participants and themes in rich detail. Such thick, rich descriptions help readers to enter into the world of the SRE teacher and to decide "about the applicability of the findings to other settings or similar contexts" (Creswell, 1998, p. 129). Constructing conversations from the SRE teachers' words help to provide these rich descriptions by taking their words and "re-embodying" them. That is, the constructed conversations seemed to give the SRE teachers' voices life again which gave a depth to the data. The constructed conversations are discussed in Chapter Four and can be found in Appendix 5.1, 6.1, 7.1, and 8.1. The conversations helped to increase what Guba and Lincoln (2005) describe as the fairness of the research; a balanced reflection of all stakeholders' voices that are apparent in the text.

3.6.2 Transferability

Rich descriptions of the setting and participants are also important for transferability, the second aspect of trustworthiness. Transferability corresponds to external validity and deals with case-to-case generalisability; it answers the question, "can these research findings be transferred to another setting or group" (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). It is achieved when sufficient information is provided about the researcher, research methods, and participants to enable the reader to determine transferability (Morrow, 2005). This is what Dey (2004) is referring to when he describes theoretical sufficiency; it is discussed further in Chapter Four. In particular, rich descriptions help the reader to establish the degree of similarity with other situations (Shenton, 2004). To facilitate this transferability, I have given clear descriptions of the scope of my research, the selection and characteristics of the participants, the teaching context of the participants, the data collection and analysis process, and appropriate participant quotations (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004). This transferability is related to the general patterns that I found in the data that are demonstrated in the constructed conversations, and reflect the distinctiveness in SRE pedagogy articulated by the diverse participants in the study. The patterns can not only be generalised to other SRE teachers, but also to other groups or settings. Similar

to the way the research resonated with SRE teachers I spoke to about my research; there were also times when I described my research to other people who identified the same patterns in their experience. For example, the guest/host relationship described in Chapter Five echoed some of the experiences of a woman who works as a fairy storyteller in public libraries and events, and a peripatetic music teacher in a public school.

3.6.3 Dependability

Dependability focuses on whether the research results would be the same if a study was "replicated with the same or similar participants in a similar context" (Bitsch, 2005, p. 86). To ensure dependability in this study, all initial interviews used the same question guide. However, due to the nature of constructivist grounded theory, the interviews did not all follow the same course as participants often took the interview to different places. In addition, the second interviews varied according to the themes that were constructed during analysis of both the interviews and journal entries. It was therefore important, as Tobin and Begley (2004) point out, that the research process was logical, traceable and clearly documented and demonstrated through an audit trail. This "allows any observer to trace the course of the research step-by-step via the decisions made and the procedures described" (Shenton, 2004, p. 72); enable a future researcher to repeat the study; and also allows a reader to determine whether appropriate research practices have been followed (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). In this study, I have attempted to ensure that the research in this study is logical and traceable by comprehensively documenting the data collection and analysis process in Chapters Three and Four. This documentation would enable a different researcher with a different group of participants to replicate the study. The constructed conversations also add to the dependability of this study because they demonstrate how a group of SRE teachers with a variety of experiences of teaching SRE; for example teaching in small and large schools located in rural, suburban and city settings, all describe similar experiences.

3.6.4 Confirmability

Finally, confirmability establishes that the data and grounded theory are not the figment of a researcher's imagination (M. Patton, 2002), bias or prejudice (Bitsch, 2005). This is achieved by linking findings and interpretations in a readily discernable way (Guba & Lincoln, 1989) and by clearly demonstrating my personal involvement

through the reflexive statement in this chapter. Because the integrity of the findings lie in the data and how they are tied together (Morrow, 2005), the treatment of the data is very important. In this study, the use of journals and a second interview helped to support and enhance the initial interview data. In addition, data from the Teacher Books and Student Books further helped to explicate teachers' attitudes and behaviour. The description of the iterative analysis and coding of the data, as well as using the constructed conversations to represent the data, an audit trail and member checking ultimately helped to enhance research confirmability because all aspects of the research process are available to any reader. Both the coding process and resultant four conceptual categories that are explained in the SRE Pedagogy Lotus are also clearly described and extensive examples are provided from the data. Again, the constructed conversations play a role in confirmability by allowing the participants' and not the researcher's voice to be heard. This allows the research to be opened up to critical evaluation to ensure confirmability.

3.7   Ethical considerations

Ethics approval was initially granted by the University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval number HE10/144) for data collection from 25 August 2010 to 25 August 2011. Early interviews with SRE stakeholders and SRE teachers were conducted during this time. Further ethics approval was given by the University of New England Human Research Ethics Committee (Approval number HE11/108) for data collection from 24 May 2011 to 24 May, 2012 to complete data collection in this study.

Ruane (2005, p. 16) points out that research "must abide by standards of professionalism and honesty; our efforts must strive to earn respect and trust of both research participants and the public at large". Informed consent, accuracy, privacy, and confidentiality are the four cornerstones of ethical research (Christians, 2005). In any research, participants have the right to be informed about its "nature and consequences" (Christians, 2005, p. 144). Prior to their consent being given, participants were given a Participant Information Letter (appendix 3.3). This letter outlined the nature of the study and their role in the research. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any time without any disadvantage. Participants signed an informed consent form (appendix 3.4) prior to engagement in the study.

It is inappropriate to use "fabrications, fraudulent materials, omissions or contrivances" (Christians, 2005, p. 145) in the research process or reporting. To ensure accuracy and to avoid deception, the nature of the research was fully disclosed to the participants. In addition, all interviews were audio-recorded and participants were given the opportunity to read their interview transcriptions. Research findings were made available to all participants.

It was important to develop safeguards to protect participants' identities and the locations of the research. The Participant Information Letter explained the privacy and confidentiality procedures to the participants. These procedures included the secure storage of all data, and ensuring that personal data was "made public only behind the shield of anonymity" (Christians, 2005, p. 145). In addition, all data was coded as soon after collection as was practical.

3.8   Conclusion

This purpose of this study is to explore SRE pedagogy, the particular pedagogy of SRE that is different to its related classroom pedagogy and RE pedagogy. This study employs constructivist grounded theory methods, a research method that is well suited to exploring issues such as SRE pedagogy where limited research has been conducted. This chapter has outlined the epistemological paradigm of the methodology; provided a rationale for using a methodology based on constructivist grounded theory methods and using extant theoretical perspectives from social and educational theory to construct a theory; given my reflexive statement about my experiences and perspectives on SRE; described the research scope and data collection methods; and outlined the study's approach to research trustworthiness.

This study is based on a constructivist paradigm where reality is understood to be multiple and complex, and constructed by individuals and groups within their environment. Constructivist grounded theory acknowledges that rather than being discovered and retrieved, knowledge is constructed from data. In addition, engaging with extant literature during analysis may add richness and depth to the constructed theory. It is a methodology that is iterative, inductive, emergent and open ended. It responds to the situation in which the research is occurring and continually searches for evidence which refutes the emerging theory. The methodology used in this study is largely based on Charmaz's approach to constructivist grounded theory. As I

worked with the data from this study I found that I needed an additional step in the analytical process to that described by Charmaz. The construction of the teachers' data into conversations between the teachers was the analytical bridge I required to make sense of the data. These conversations enabled me to make deeper connections with researchers in fields beyond religious education whose thinking resonated with the conceptual categories that were constructed from the data. The construction of these conversations is discussed more fully in Chapter Four.

I chose to use constructivist grounded theory for the study because it emphasises the emergence of meaning which is co-constructed in an interplay between the researcher, participants and data. Constructivist grounded theory is also appropriate in an area such as SRE where there is limited current research. It acknowledges the constructivist nature of teaching and learning, allows the voices of a variety of SRE teachers to be heard, and allows me to draw on my experience in the construction of theory. My SRE experience is an important aspect of this study because it provides the passion and sustainability for the research to occur, compelling me to continue reading, thinking, questioning and reflecting on the nature of SRE pedagogy.

Data collection flows from the research question: How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence how they embody their pedagogy? Rich data was obtained from interviews with SRE teachers and the teaching journals they kept for one term of teaching. In addition, the extracts from the Teacher and Student Books used in SRE were analysed. The scope of this study is limited to Christian SRE in primary schools. The study was carried out in Australia's two most populous states, New South Wales and Victoria. Participants were SRE teachers in both large and small schools, and city, suburban and rural schools. Data collection took place between August 2010 and December 2011.

Trustworthiness was used as the criteria for judging the quality of this research. Trustworthiness is demonstrated through credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Firstly, credibility, the value and believability of the grounded theory that is constructed from the data, is demonstrated through the use of interviews and journals that allowed the participants' voices to be heard; inviting participants and others to read and comment on the analysis; and providing rich descriptions of the setting, participants and themes in the study. Secondly, transferability, whether the

research finding can be transferred to another setting or group of participants, is achieved by providing sufficient information about the research methods, participants, the analysis process, and the constructed conversations. Transferability enables the exploration of patterns or trends in the data that are drawn from the voices of the participants and the development of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus for explicating the data. Thirdly, dependability focuses on ensuring that the research process is logical, traceable and clearly documented. Fourthly, confirmability links findings and interpretations in a readily discernible way.

Chapter four provides a detailed description of the coding and analysis of the data to ensure the trustworthiness of the research. Coding is a layered and iterative process that moves analysis from the particularities of an individual's experience as an SRE teacher to the more conceptual issues that are relevant to theorisation of the data. It is the "pivotal link" between data and theory that weaves together the "generalisable theoretical statements that transcend specific times and places and contextual analysis of actions and events" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46) . It is to this analytical process of moving from data to coding to theory that I now turn.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS AND CODING

This chapter discusses the approach to analysis and coding in this study. It describes how the data was coded, how memo writing was used in the study, sampling decisions, and the construction of conceptual categories. The chapter concludes with the first construction conversation that sets the scene for the following chapters. Data analysis in constructivist grounded theory uses an iterative, emergent approach. The process of analysis is illustrated in Diagram 4.1 (over the page). During analysis developing ideas are affirmed, checked and refined as indicated by the arrows in the diagram. Constructivist grounded theory begins with a general research question (at the base of Diagram 4.1) and follows the "interests, leads and hunches" (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1162) that are identified in the data. Diagram 4.1 shows the upward movement from the general research question: "How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy?" to writing drafts prior to theory development. Each section of the diagram shows the analytical activity in bold font and an explanation of the activity. The arrows on the sides of the diagram represent the iterative nature of analysis and the concurrent data collection and analysis that is discussed in Chapter Three. The sections of diagram 4.1 provide the structure for this chapter with base levels yielding insights at higher levels; each section of the diagram (4.1 to 4.7) is discussed more fully throughout the chapter.
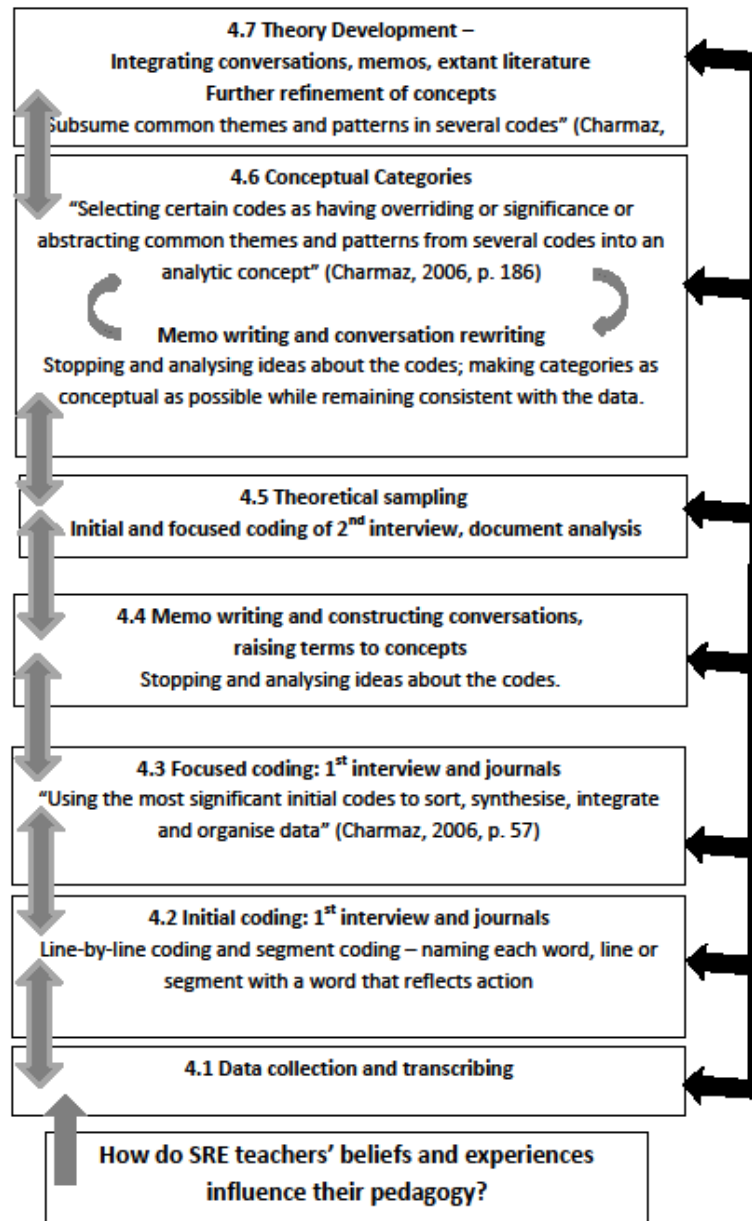
4.1 Data collection and transcribing

The two main sources of data in this study are interviews with the SRE teachers and their written journal entries[26]. These two sources resulted in 1762 minutes of recorded data and over 25 000 words of journal entries. Manually transcribing the first interviews as soon after data collection as possible is the first step in analysis. This ensures the accuracy of the collected data and helps the management of the large amount of data being collected. Although the transcribing is time consuming it was very helpful because I had to listen to the interviews several times to complete the transcribing. This listening served as an informal initial analysis as several themes became apparent during this process. These transcribed interviews were then manually coded. I chose not to use any computer coding program because I wanted to stay close to the data. Coding full transcripts rather than excerpts or notes

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[26] As has been previously noted, data from SRE stakeholders' interviews was not used in this study.

Diagram 4.1 Process of data analysis (adapted from Charmaz, 1990, p. 1166)

4.7 Theory Development –
Integrating conversations, memos, extant literature
Further refinement of concepts
Subsume common themes and patterns in several codes" (Charmaz,

4.6 Conceptual Categories
"Selecting certain codes as having overriding or significance or
abstracting common themes and patterns from several codes into an
analytic concept" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 186)

Memo writing and conversation rewriting
Stopping and analysing ideas about the codes; making categories as
conceptual as possible while remaining consistent with the data.

4.5 Theoretical sampling
Initial and focused coding of 2nd interview, document analysis

4.4 Memo writing and constructing conversations,
raising terms to concepts
Stopping and analysing ideas about the codes.

4.3 Focused coding: 1st interview and journals
"Using the most significant initial codes to sort, synthesise, integrate
and organise data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 57)

4.2 Initial coding: 1st interview and journals
Line-by-line coding and segment coding – naming each word, line or
segment with a word that reflects action

4.1 Data collection and transcribing

**How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences
influence their pedagogy?**

from interviews helps to bring a deeper level of understanding of the richness of
diverse experiences. These transcripts can also be easily returned to through the
comparative process.

4.2   Initial Coding

Coding, the initial data analysis method used in this study, enables the
construction of meaning from this large amount of data. Coding enables the

"conceptual abstraction of data and its reintegration as theory" (Holton, 2007, p. 265) to take place. It is the pivotal link between data collection and data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). It identifies patterns in the data by breaking it down from its original context, reconceptualising it and constructing it in the form of categories, themes, stories and theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Coding is an emergent process that initiates theory development (Charmaz, 2003) by attaching labels that "simultaneously summarise and account for each piece of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43).

Codes establish a relationship between the data and the participants by looking at commonalities within an individual participant's data and across all participants' data. In so doing, it moves from an individual SRE teacher's experiences and beliefs to viewing all the SRE teachers' experiences and beliefs together. Coding therefore operates within a hermeneutical circle that enables the understanding of all the data through a close viewing of the individual parts of the data. It is an inferential process that leads to an understanding of patterns that can be captured in conceptual and theoretical terms. As Charmaz (2006, p.46) puts it, coding "defines what is happening in the data [to be able to] begin to grapple with what it means". Table 4.1 provides several examples of initial coding from a section of data from Alicia's first interview. Codes are constructed by naming the data and asking the question 'what is this an example of?'(Star, 2007). For example, in the extract of Alicia's interview, she says:

> "*You say something and then they say 'yes but if that's true why does such and such happen' that to me is genuine engagement and that's what I'm here for. Where often, I think, because of the rush of the amount of material you're trying to get through, you don't have the time to go on that path*"

I named the underlined line as "Having too much to do". In initial coding each word, line or segment of data is named. I used line-by-line coding for both the interviews and reflective journals. Line-by-line coding helped me to look at the interview data differently, because as Charmaz (2006, p. 51) explains "it frees you from becoming so immersed in your respondents' worldviews that you accept them without question".

Table 4.1 Example of line-by-line coding in Alicia's data

Data	Codes

Interview extract	Something you've said prompting them to ask something different. Because that is genuine engagement, it's almost a dialogue then. You say something and then they say 'yes but if that's true why does such and such happen' that to me is genuine engagement and that's what I'm here for. Where often, I think, because of the rush of the amount of material you're trying to get through, you don't have the time to go on that path. And you don't always want the time either because you are going to lose control of the class so you have to keep going with the curriculum. But when I feel the students are really engaged is when they are hearing what I said and thinking what the implications of that is.	Prompting Genuine engaging Leading to dialogue Engaging, reason for SRE? Having too much to do Not having time Fearing where lesson goes Losing control Being really engaged Thinking about implications
Journal extract	I read carefully through the Teacher Book and Scripture passages. Considered what the students would make of these. As I wished to include a craft activity by way of something different, I prepared a powerpoint of main points so that I could speed up my passage through the lesson. (Mmm, *nearly worked!*) This was done 4 days before the lesson (about 2 hours work), so I was able to come back to it a day or two later and see if unfamiliarity rendered anything unclear (as potentially to the students). Made a few adjustments. Photocopied the opening message flower templates and cut in squares for students to cut, and fold to be able to open and shut to reveal the message (1 hour).	Carefully reading material Considering student reaction Doing something different Wanting to speed up lesson] Returning to preparation to] check] Adjusting lesson] Practical preparation –] photocopying, cutting] folding

Although the journals were sent to me on a weekly basis, I chose to analyse each participant's entire journal as one piece of data at the end of the ten weeks. This was especially important for the journal entries where participants wrote insubstantial or vague notes, often as short dot points. It also provided a richer picture of a teacher's pedagogical experience. Once the journals had been coded, they were then compared to the categories that were being constructed from the interview data where they enriched, confirmed and sometimes challenged the ongoing analysis. They were also used to help determine questions for the second interviews. The initial coding of the first interviews and journals led to the construction of over nine hundred and fifty individual codes.

4.3   Focused coding

Focused coding is the second coding phase. In focused coding the most significant initial codes are sorted into common patterns and ideas to make analytic sense of the data. Focused coding helped me to manage the large amounts of data generated in the study. For each participant, I put all the data with the same codes together on one computer document and I printed this document onto cardboard. I cut up out each code in the printout to create "code cards", small cards of individual codes. I spread the code cards out on the floor and started to work with the data to

identify the most significant and frequent codes. This iterative process also allowed me to identify codes that were similar but named differently. For example, several of the nineteen initial codes for the focused code "Having an opportunity to hear" were very similar: coming to school with no knowledge, not coming from a Christian home, not coming from Christian homes, not coming from church backgrounds, and not hearing about Jesus in their own homes.

Initially data from each interview and journal entry was analysed as a separate unit. However, in keeping with the constant comparative approach of grounded theory, analysis also occurred across each of the units of data. That is, rather than seeing the interviews as one set of data and the journals as another set, I read them as one. Reading the journals provides another way to hear the voices of the SRE teachers. That is, the data in the journals is no different to the interview data and can be coded as part of the one set of data. This allows data to be compared with other data to find corresponding themes and also to find themes that are unique to one set of data. Because coding is an iterative rather than linear process, it is important to 'interact with the data again and again and ask many different questions of them' (Charmaz, 2006, p. 46). This is represented in Diagram 4.1 by the double ended grey arrows on the left hand side of the diagram that show the interaction between each level of analysis; and by the black arrows on the right hand side of the diagram that show the interaction at all levels of the analysis. This means that even at the final stage of theory construction, it may be important to return to the transcribed data, initial codes or focused codes as the theory is constructed.

Codes were divided into ones that were common to several interviews and ones that were unique for a particular interview. In this process common patterns that SRE teachers shared and unique instances or views of individual SRE teachers were identified. For example, "controlling children" and "the Holy Spirit working" were two codes that recurred in several of the interviews, while "engaging children" occurred in all the interviews. This process helped me to identify and develop categories that captured the nature of the SRE teachers' experiences. Once again, this was not a linear process as new understanding often led back both to the initial coding and the interview transcripts. For example, I realised that the epistemological lenses of SRE teachers were not explicit in the initial coding. So much of what they 'knew' had to be inferred in the interpretative coding that I was doing. I had to return to the

interview transcripts and look for times when participants used words that implicitly pointed to their epistemology such as knowing, faith, and belief. This process led to a different way of understanding the initial and focused codes, with the focused codes alerting me to common patterns across diverse instances.

4.4   Memo writing

In addition to the coding process, memo writing helped me to be more reflective about the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and to identify when I had reached theoretical sufficiency. Charmaz (2006) describes writing memos as the methodological link which transforms data into theory. Hoare, Mills, and Francis (2012, p. 243) identify the following roles of memo writing: serving as a link between data collection and drafts, enabling a researcher to ask questions of the data, and serving as an audit trail. Essentially a reflective process, memo writing provided me with the opportunity, as described by Mills et al. (2006b, p. 10) to "remember, question, analyse and make meaning about the time spent with participants and the data that were generated together." Memos assist in further exploration, explanation and theorising about emergent patterns (Lempert, 2009) and my memos recorded my analytical conversations with myself and began the process of conceptualizing the data as conversation.

Although memos are the pivotal step between data and theory (Charmaz, 2006), like all analysis in constructivist grounded theory they are not completed in a linear fashion after the completion of coding. At any time in the research process a memo provides "a snap-shot of thought processes … that facilitate an understanding of what perspectives were held and why decisions were made" (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008, p. 71). I started writing memos as soon as I started interviewing teachers. These early memos helped guide subsequent data gathering and develop my ideas. Other memos provided a starting place for theorising about SRE pedagogy and helped to move my ideas from examples to abstract ideas. For example, the following is an extract from an early memo regarding teacher questions:

> I am also very interested in IRE initiate/response/evaluate teacher talk that I suspect is what is going on with SRE teachers. [IRE – triadic dialogue (Mehan 1979 and Cazden 2001) - teacher initiates a conversation (often with a question), the student responds, the teacher evaluates the student's response. Predictability of lessons: Speakers take turns, overlapping utterances not valued, access to the floor was obtained in systematic ways. It is a stance

adopted by teachers for the purpose of achieving educational objectives while maintaining social control. Such an approach results in students equating success with discovering and providing the teacher with the correct answer.] This is because they say things like 'I know that the children are learning because they answer my questions'. I suspect that the questions in the Teacher Books encourage this approach. As they give a list of predetermined questions for the children to answer, they often even give expected answers in italics. Myhill (2006) describes classrooms where the focus of discourse is more on curriculum content and finding the one "right" answer rather than on the cognitive development of students. Authentic questions (the asker has not prespecified an answer) are rare. Isn't this what happens when the children start asking lots of questions in SRE, and so often we have to stay on track of the teacher's manual so we let the questions pass - let me just finish this and then we'll answer that question.

This memo helped me to look for examples of this triadic dialogue in the SRE teachers' descriptions of lessons they had taught, the journal entries and the Teacher Books. It helped me to consider how the SRE teachers dealt with the content they were teaching and how much they allowed their students to explore the content to construct their own understanding.

4.4.1   Constructing conversations

In addition to memo writing, constructing conversations became an integral aspect of my analysis. During analysis I grappled with how to effectively present the large amount of data and realised that I needed what Henderson, Holland, McGrellis, Sharpe, and Thomson (2012, p. 17) describe as a "methodological innovation …[that] compels new forms of writing research". As I thought more innovatively about how to present the data, Wilson (2009) provided insight into possible innovations of data presentation in constructivist grounded theory. To capture the complexity of her participants' experiences, she analysed and presented the data in her research about ballet dancers by developing narratives that were a "summation of [her participants'] voices" (p. 10). This innovation is "a method for summarising the data" that she describes as lying "outside of a grounded theory tradition" (p. 10). Like Wilson, I chose to use narrative as part of the analysis and presentation of data, although in contrast with Wilson's summation of voices, I chose to construct conversations that retain each participant's voice. Later in the study, I also looked to educational and other theorists in a theoretical conversation between the data and developing theory.

Constructed conversations are a literary device that draw together the different beliefs and experiences described by SRE teachers in their interviews and journals.

They provide a way of both analysing and presenting the data. They were constructed by taking the data from a conceptual category identified in the analysis and weaving it together into an imagined conversation between all the teachers in the study. As I wrote the conversations I aimed, as Barone (2008) describes in his discussion of arts-based research texts, "to secure a proximity to the truth, the 'essential drift of events as they really happened'." To achieve this I used as nearly as possible, only the words of the participants in the conversations in the hope that the constructed conversations would

> … entice the reader into experiencing the internal world of the text… in order to dwell vicariously within the (presumably) active world being portrayed, and there to imagine the lives of the "real" characters.   (Barone, 2008, p. 113)

The process of constructing conversations is similar to the use of storyline described by Birks, Mills, Francis, and Chapman (2009) in their paper A thousand words paint a picture: The use of storyline in grounded theory research. These similarities are threefold. Firstly, both constructing conversations and storyline are tools that "aid theoretical development, and to some extent, dissemination" (Birks et al., 2009, p. 406-407). Secondly, both the constructed conversations and storyline exist in the data and are not imposed onto the data. Thirdly, they can both be used throughout the research process, "with the intent of constructing, integrating and making visible the final theory" (p. 407). However, the difference lies in the way that constructed conversations use only the voices of the participants and do not explicate the final theory. Therefore the end results differ: while a storyline explains the emerging theory, a constructed conversation illustrates the emerging theory. Consequently, in this study, the constructed conversations are analytical vehicles that helped me move towards the final storyline that is written in chapters five through to eight.

As I constructed these conversations I imagined a meeting where all the teachers that participated in my research came together to talk about their beliefs and experiences relating to SRE teaching. As I read their words from the transcribed interviews and journal entries, each participant came to life for me. I could hear their voices, I could picture their faces, and I could remember their mannerisms. The constructed conversations are my way of giving life to the real people with real ideas and real passion that contribute to this study. The first of these constructed

conversations is at the end of this chapter. It is used to introduce the participants of the study.

The imagined conversations are constructed texts that wherever possible use the transcribed words from the teachers' interviews and journal entries. There is occasionally the need to provide bridging text to create a conversational flow between the participants. The initial conversations that I constructed were very long because I used all relevant data. However, as I worked with the data and the emerging concepts to construct the conversations I was able to reduce the amount of data to what was pertinent for the particular conversation. The final constructed conversations are still quite long and I have therefore chosen to place the four constructed conversations in the appendix.

Constructing conversations does more than bring the participants to life in this study. Although I initially saw conversation writing simply as a literary device for reporting data, it became obvious that it was an excellent method for making comparisons between data and data, data and codes, codes and codes, codes and categories, and categories and categories. In this way, writing conversations also became a form of analysis because it enabled me to bring the different teachers' data into relation with each other. Because a conversation is a dialogue between two or more people and not a set of propositions that are stated one after the other, constructing conversations provides a strategy for checking for rightness of the coding. For example, there were times in the construction when I tried to put the words of one of the SRE teachers in a particular conversation because the focused code indicated this was the right place for it to go, but the result was jarring and forced. When this happened I would return to the transcribed interviews, check the coding process and often find a different location for the coded data.

Constructing conversations is an important part of the analysis because it gives structure and insight into what data should be brought together. The conversations allow the participants' voices to be heard in dialogue with others and not as chunks of data that have been extracted to prove a point. In effect, the conversations give the participants humanity as they share their thoughts and feelings with one another. This process of constructing conversations provides confirmation of the coding process and

enables the integration of individual differences and similarities into a developing theory of SRE pedagogy.

With the large amount of data in this study it would have been easy to make the conversations very long. However, the point of constructing conversations is not to find a "home" for all the data, but to help understand where data fits. Therefore, while it may have been possible to include particular stories told by the SRE teachers into one of the constructed conversations, I often chose not to include them in the constructed conversations. These stories may still appear in the discussion chapters if they are used to exemplify an issue that is being discussed. For example, in Chapter Six: *Vulnerability and Authority* I include an excerpt from Beth's interview about a difficult classroom situation. While this story is used as an example of how the SRE teachers believe that God is at work in their classrooms, it is not included in the corresponding *Vulnerability and Authority* conversation.

4.5   Directed sampling

Directed sampling in this study was important for developing a rich theory of SRE pedagogy. The approach to sampling changes dynamically during the process of data collection and analysis" (Morse, 2007). While I started with convenience sampling, my research moved to purposeful sampling, and ultimately to theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is guided by the categories that are being constructed and not by a need to sample a representative population (Charmaz, 2006; Morse, 2007). Theoretical sampling is therefore guided by the emerging results "in order to saturate each emerging category/concept" (Hallberg, 2006, p. 143). Morse (2007, p. 231) points out that "It is necessary to locate 'excellent' participants to obtain excellent data". Excellent participants are one who have "been through, or observed, the experience under investigation" (p. 231), are willing to participate, and are able to be reflective about their experience. Morse goes on to explain that not all participants will have all the characteristics of an excellent participant. This was my experience and it is why not all participants completed reflective journals in my research. Although they were all SRE teachers who are going through the experience under observation, some of them did not indicate a reflective approach in their interview and some were not willing to participate. This is also why I chose not to use the interview data from the SRE stakeholders. Although their interviews were interesting, the stakeholders were outsiders to the experience I was interested in pursuing, and I

wanted to hear the insiders' voices. This allowed for a more authentic and reflexive account of SRE pedagogy from those who have to enact it rather than from those who formally prescribe it. The choice of participants is therefore directed by the 'excellence' of the participant, and the developing theory.

Throughout the initial analysis, the emerging categories guided subsequent data collection in the second interview. This assisted in refining emerging conceptual categories by filling the gaps in the data. The extra data were not collected to increase the sample or the statistical generalisability of the results, rather, the data helped to refine ideas by identifying "conceptual boundaries and pinpointing the fit and relevance of the categories" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 265). For example, SRE teachers who were unpaid volunteers all talked about being called by God to teach SRE, whereas, the SRE teachers who taught as part of their employment in the church did not mention being called. I wondered whether this was due to them seeing this as part of their calling to fulltime ministry positions. The second interviews gave me the opportunity to explore calling in the paid SRE teachers. The second interviews confirmed that this was the case. For example, Bart describes his calling as being

> *to a much wider ministry to children and young people. So SRE teaching fits within my broader caller.*

Similarly, John describes his calling in terms of

> *a specific and unmistakable pull to be living and serving in this part of the inner city. While I do not feel specifically called to SRE teaching, I do it enthusiastically because I see it as one of the many aspects of serving in this area."*

These second interviews were exciting because the data collected added depth to the data from the first interviews.

In constructivist grounded theory, data is collected until theoretical saturation is understood to occur; that is when there are no new theoretical insights to be gained from collecting data (Charmaz, 2006) and "no additional data are found that advance, modify, qualify extend or add to the theory developed" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, p. 116). However, as constructivist grounded theory acknowledges the multiple realities of the participants and that any resulting theory is only a reconstruction of these realities, it is only possible to claim theoretical saturation for the data I have collected. This is because there could be other data that I do not have that may lead to

the construction of other categories. Dey (2004) suggests the term "theoretical sufficiency" instead of theoretical saturation to represent the categories that are constructed from the data. I prefer this term because there is no way of knowing with certainty that collecting more data would not result in new theoretical insights. Theoretical sufficiency therefore suggests that the categories have been developed sufficiently rather than exhaustively (as this is difficult to determine) for the construction of a grounded theory. Document analysis helped me to reach theoretical sufficiency as it provided both further insight into the categories.

4.5.1 Document analysis

Document analysis of the Teacher and Student Workbooks occurred at the same time as the initial and focused coding of the second interviews as illustrated in Diagram 4.1. All of the SRE teachers discussed the way they used the Teacher and Student Books[27] in their interviews and journals. In the analysis I was interested to see how the resources supported or challenged the categories that were being constructed.

Document analysis is an unobtrusive research method that critically examines and compares one or more documents. It aims to identify key themes that are evident in the document and "draw a picture of the suppositions and meanings that constitute the cultural world of which the textual material is a specimen" (Perakyla, 2005, p. 870) . Document analysis is

> an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving and analysing documents for their relevance, significance, and meaning" (Altheide, 1996, p. 2).

analysis is an approach that moves "deeper and deeper into understanding the data, representing the data, and making an interpretation of the larger meaning of the data" (Creswell, 2003, p. 190). As an integral part of the research process, I used the same coding and constant comparative approach to these documents as I used for the interviews and journals to add richness to my understanding of SRE pedagogy.

The participants talked about both the Teacher Books and the Student Workbooks in their interviews and journals. Teachers use one of four SRE teaching

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[27] For some of the SRE teachers this meant explaining why they did not use them.

programs provided by SRE Providers[28] or they create their own teaching program. The SRE teaching programs provide a teacher's manual (the Teacher Book) and corresponding student workbook (the Student Workbook) for each level of school from Kindergarten (Prep in Victoria) to year 6. The Teacher Book provides teachers with a guided description of the lesson to be taught. As these SRE teaching programs tell teachers what and how to teach they provide insight into SRE pedagogy both by reflecting the pedagogy of SRE providers, and influencing the practice of their users. In choosing a a sample of teaching materials to analyse I elected to focus on the Year 3 (or Stage 2) set of Teacher Books and Student Workbooks from each of the SRE Providers used by the participants. This year level was chosen because it sits in the middle of the range of resources that are produced for the teachers. Although I read these documents in their entirety to "obtain a general sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning" (Creswell, 2003, p. 191) I focused my analysis on the Easter lesson in each book. This lesson was chosen to provide consistency across the different manuals because all of the Teacher Books and Student Workbooks include an Easter lesson.

4.6   Conceptual categories

Conceptual Categories is the title for a large section of Diagram 4.1. This section of the diagram represents a time consuming part of the analysis. Although initial and focused coding was complete and all data had been collected, the analysis was not complete. Categories that explained and conceptualised data needed to be constructed (Charmaz, 1990). There are actually two phases to this part of the analysis: the construction of categories and the construction of conceptual categories. Although these two phases are not always described as two explicit phases in the constructivist grounded theory literature, I have chosen to differentiate between the two parts of this process. Initially categories were constructed from the focused codes, however as I worked with these initial categories to construct the conversations it became clear that more work needed to be done to move these categories to the

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[28] In Victoria, ACCESS Ministries is the sole provider of Christian SRE and publishes the Teacher Books and Student Workbooks used by all Christian SRE teachers. In New South Wales there are many SRE Providers publishing a number of Teacher Books and Student Workbooks. SRE teachers in this study used teaching resources published by ACCESS Ministries, the Sydney Anglican Diocese, the Baptist church or the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine Archdiocese of Sydney. More information about these resources is in Appendix 4.1.

conceptual level required to construct a theory of SRE pedagogy. It is interesting to note that Charmaz (2006) points out that many grounded theory studies are descriptive rather than theoretical. This move from the initial categories to the conceptual categories was an important step in ensuring that this study moved from the descriptive to the theoretical.

Initially, as a part of the analytical process I grouped the focused codes and categories by epistemology, axiology and methodology. However, in reality it is difficult to divide the conversations into these three pedagogical lenses because epistemology, axiology and methodology are seamlessly interwoven in SRE pedagogy. The following excerpt from Nerida's journal illustrates this interwoven nature of pedagogy. It is also important to note that although this excerpt can be read through the three lenses, Nerida does not identify her pedagogy in terms of epistemology, axiology or methodology. Firstly, looking through an epistemological lens at Nerida's description, she reveals her belief that God made everything and reveals knowledge of Himself to His people. Secondly, Nerida believes that all people are valued and treasured by God and teachers can share that with their students (axiological lens). Finally, Nerida "hams" the conversation up, uses visual aids, encourages students and makes them feel special, engages the students, and pitches the lesson at the correct level (methodological lens).

> *There was just this part [suggested in the Teachers' Manual] that introduced the concept of God making something really special. I said it was in this little box I had and I hammed up that it was God's most special creation, He was just so proud of it, etc... In the box was a mirror and kids came and looked inside and I got really excited and said 'Did you see how beautiful that was?! How cool is it that God made that in there?' The kids who looked in the box were beaming from ear to ear and the rest of the class was dying to know what was in the box. Eventually we revealed that it was the children and that God made everyone. Almost all the kids were just beaming from ear to ear. This mirror thing then segued nicely into the idea of the mirror being an image, not the actual thing and we are made in God's image as male and female. I felt like both those things were nicely pitched at this class and the children really appreciated this important concept that they are made by God and treasured by him.*

The three lenses that pedagogy can be viewed through provide a helpful way of exploring pedagogy to ensure a broad understanding of pedagogy. However, as these lenses are rarely the way that SRE teachers talk about their pedagogy they should not be imposed on the data, rather they should be used to explicate the data when

appropriate. Therefore, rather than imposing these lenses on the data, I worked with the codes to understand what category they belonged to regardless of their epistemology, axiology or methodology. Codes from this passage were placed in the categories of engaging children with questions and stories, teaching the truth or using available resources; and ultimately to the conceptual category of *Truth and Hope.* Therefore, like the other conceptual categories, within *Truth and Hope* there is evidence of the interwoven nature of epistemological, axiological and methodological pedagogy.

The iterative analysis moved from thirteen initial categories, to nine categories and finally to four conceptual categories that form the basis of the grounded theory. The following description of how I constructed the conversations illustrates the movement from categories to conceptual categories. Firstly, I began to write conversations based upon the thirteen initial categories constructed through the coding process:

1. Being a guest
2. Being a witness called by God
3. Dealing with challenges relating to subject matter
4. Dealing with challenges within the classroom
5. Dealing with structural issues
6. Developing as a teacher
7. Developing relationships with children
8. Engaging kids
9. Managing the learning environment
10. Hopefully sowing seeds
11. Teaching strategies
12. Using available resources
13. Working with God

In this first phase of constructing the conversations, as already stated, when the data did not fit the conversation I returned to the original interview transcriptions and journals and reviewed how the data had been coded. Often at this point, I decided that the focused coding was incorrect and rethink where data belonged. There were also

times when I amalgamated or separated categories during this process. This iterative process enabled me to posit codes, test them further by reference to the data again, and then strengthen the robustness of the emerging conceptual category. This resulted in nine categories whose data was constructed into conversations. They were:

1. Being a guest
2. Being called by God
3. Developing relationships with children
4. Engaging kids
5. Managing Students and the learning environment
6. Sowing Seeds
7. Teaching the truth
8. Using available resources
9. Walking with God.

In the second phase of constructing the conversations, the conversations were rewritten as the analysis moved from a reliance on coding and the initial categories to conceptual categories. In this phase the final four conceptual categories were constructed as I moved between the codes, the constructed conversations and extant literature. This was not an easy process as I grappled with the experiences and beliefs of the SRE teachers to arrive at a conceptual understanding of their pedagogy.

1. Guest and host
2. Vulnerability and authority
3. Truth and hope
4. Relational teaching.

Table 4.2 (over the page) shows the movement from initial codes to focused codes to categories and finally to conceptual categories. It includes examples of initial codes, and all focused codes, categories, and conceptual categories. This table is useful for understanding how the analysis occurred in this study. Like Diagram 4.1, the analysis is shown as an upward movement from the data at the bottom of the table to the conceptual codes of the grounded theory situated at the top of the table.

Table 4.2 Analysis of SRE teachers' data

Conceptual Categories	Guest and Host	Vulnerability and Authority	Truth and Hope		Relational Teaching
	Constant Comparison	Construction of conversations Memo writing Extant literature Returning to data			
Categories	Being a guest	Being called by God Managing the learning environment Managing the students	Engaging children with questions and stories Sowing seeds Teaching the truth Using available resources		Developing relationships with children Walking with God Engaging and managing the students
Focused codes	Being a guest Being different to classroom teaching Being different to other teaching Being flexible Being out of my control Developing a relationship with the school Having a classroom teacher in the room Having enough time Opting in or out	Assessing their learning Being a volunteer Being a witness Being called Being more than a job Being part of the community Being used by God Controlling the class Dealing with challenges Dealing with questions Dealing with difficult kids Developing a relationship with the school Establishing a learning environment Having a classroom teacher in the room Having enough time Increasing confidence Knowing names Wanting to give up	Asking questions Assessing their learning Being creative Being different to classroom teaching Being flexible Being relational Building on previous learning Conflicting worldviews Dealing with politics Dealing with questions Developing relationships with children Engaging kids Having an opportunity to hear Having church kids Having fun	Leading discussions Learning from other teachers Listening Planning and designing lessons Recalling past teachers Slowing down Sowing seeds Storytelling Teaching about Easter Teaching difficult ideas Teaching the truth Teaching the unit Using bibles Using student books Using the available resources Using visuals Wanting to give up Writing things down	Being part of the community Being a witness Being real Being relational Being used by God Dealing with difficult kids Developing relationships with children Having a relationship with God Having enough time Knowing names Praying Seeing God's power Seeing the Holy Spirit working Walking with God
Initial codes – these are examples of initial codes are there are over 950 codes.	Asking kids if they want to be there Being a guest in the room Being able to choose if they come or not Being courteous to the school Creating a teaching space Having a supportive principal Having no control over your environment Having no set up time Learning the language of the school	Being an outsider Being called Being judged Feeling discouraged when things aren't going well Having authority in the classroom Needing support Stepping in with heart in my mouth Wanting to give up	Declaring the gospel so they can respond later Having faith later in life Giving kids a foundation for later Making wise choices later Not having to get it now Responding to God in their own time Sowing the seed Teaching for later		Being transparent Being human Building rapport Building relationships Having integrity Having a godly character Putting myself into the lesson Sharing our lives Walking the talk

4.7   Integrating conversations, memos, extant literature

The top section of Diagram 4.1 (on page 88) represents the final stage of analysis that is illustrated in Diagram 4.2 (page 106). In this stage, the conversations, memos, extant literature and further examples from the data are woven together to construct the theory of SRE pedagogy that is based on the four conceptual categories constructed in the analysis: (i) *Guest and Host*, (ii) *Vulnerability and Authority*, (iii) *Truth and Hope*, and (iv) *Relational Teaching*. It is important in this discussion to address the use of extant literature in the construction of the theory of SRE pedagogy. This is particularly the case because there is disagreement on how extant literature should be used in grounded theory literature. As Dunne (2011, p. 113) points out, the use of extant literature "represents a polemical and divisive issue which continues to spark debate" in grounded theory discussions.

While grounded theory literature acknowledges that there is a place for extant literature in the methodology; the issue is when it should be used in the research process (Dunne, 2011; McCallin, 2006; Walls, Parahoo, & Fleming, 2010). There appears to be general agreement by grounded theorists that extant literature should be resisted at the onset of grounded theory research (Charmaz, 2006; Dick, 2007; Glaser, 1998). However, Dunne (2011, p. 115) makes it clear that grounded theorists "are not calling for a blanket ban on engagement with existing literature" but rather that extant literature and theories should "earn their way into your narrative" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 126). The main concern is that extant literature is referred to too early in the research potentially leading to "importing preconceived ideas and imposing them on [the data]" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 165). However, some writers such as Thornberg (2011, p. 249) suggest that

> Pre-existing theories and research findings can be used as heuristic tools… that help the researcher to focus the attention on certain phenomena, aspects or nuances as well as imaginarily see beyond data.

Similarly, Goldkuhl and Cronholm (2010) in their discussion of multi-grounded theory, their alternative to grounded theory, argue that research should be grounded in both data and extant literature. McMenamin (2006, p. 134) goes further by suggesting that a literature search prior to the study enables a researcher to understand the "geography of the subject" that is being studied. The middle ground that is taken in this research is that there is a place for extant literature once the work of coding and analysis has been completed. Again

Thornberg (2011, p. 252) is helpful in his description of "theoretical sampling of the literature" where the researcher

> searches and reads literature guided by the codes, concepts, questions, and ideas that he or she develops during data collection and analysis. It is a highly interactive process in which the researcher's coding and questions take him or her to some of the literature, which in turn sends him or her back to the empirical field and to his or her tentative codes and concepts with new lenses and questions, and so on.

In this way, extant theoretical concepts must earn their way into a theory, rather than being forced to fit at the researcher's whim. That is, as the theory is constructed from the data, the researcher is driven to engage with the literature (Walls et al., 2010), always taking care to not be "influenced by predetermined theory" (Birks et al., 2009, p. 415). The hard analytical work must be done with coding and analysis of the data prior to engaging with extant literature, however, there was a point in this study where it was important to deepen and enrich understanding of the SRE teachers' experiences and understanding of pedagogy. It is important to note that the final four conceptual categories were constructed through the coding and analysis of data and were not impositions from extant literature and theories. Rather, my reading was directed by these categories.

The four conceptual categories constructed in the analysis capture the distinctive nature of SRE pedagogy for the SRE teachers where subsequent layers are embedded within the previous layer and the outer layer of *Guest and Host* constrains and shapes all aspects of SRE pedagogy. These layers come together to form the SRE Pedagogy Lotus illustrated in Diagram 4.2 (on page 100). In the SRE Pedagogy Lotus each of the conceptual codes is represented heuristically by a layer of the lotus where subsequent layers are embedded within the previous layer. The lotus represents the interconnectedness of the four conceptual categories with *Relational Teaching* at the heart of SRE teaching.

I chose the lotus because of its layered shape. However, as I read about lotuses I was also struck by how the lotus grows in "muddy waters, emerging from them unblemished and untouched by pollution" (von Baeyer, 2000, p. 12). As I reflect on the participants in this study this seems to be a fair description of them as well. SRE teaching can be a "muddy" experience and yet the stories of these SRE teachers point

Diagram 4.2 The SRE Pedagogy Lotus
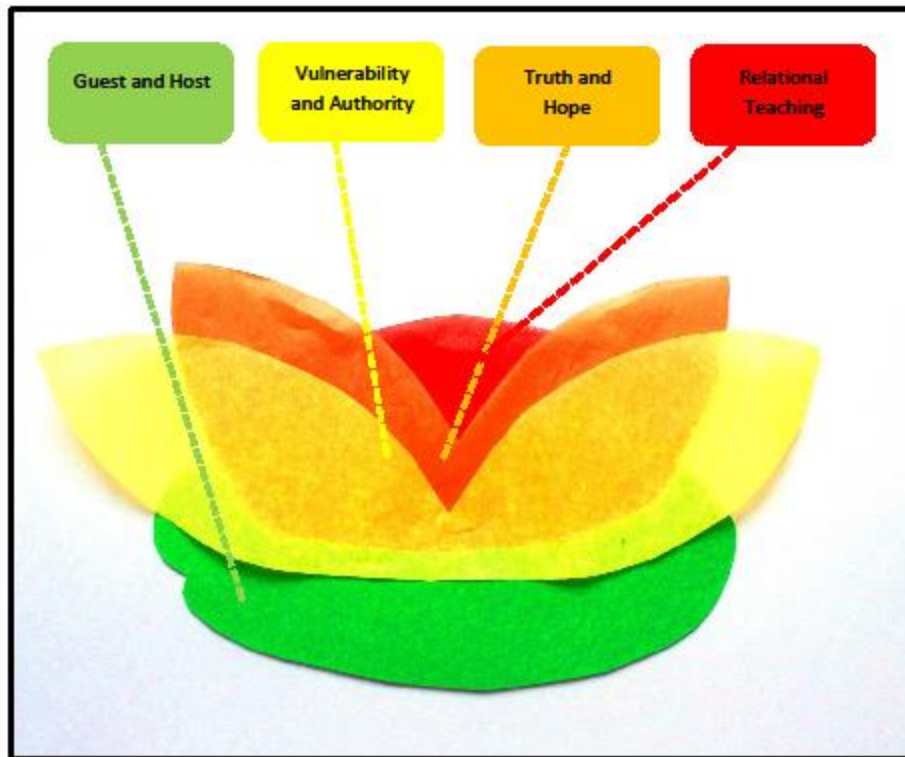
to an experience that emerges beyond the mud and is somehow "unblemished" by the challenges of SRE. The lotus also hints at the lenses through which pedagogy can be viewed: (i) with its connections to Eastern religion, the lotus connects with epistemology; (ii) with its unblemished beauty, the lotus connects with axiology; and (iii) with the way it self-cleans its leaves as it emerges from muddy waters (The lotus effect), the lotus connects with methodology. It is the layered, embedded nature of the lotus; the clean beauty of the lotus; and the three lenses through which the lotus can be viewed that make it an excellent heuristic for understanding SRE pedagogy.

The SRE Pedagogy Lotus is discussed in chapters five through to eight. In the following section I describe how I came to construct the scenario for the conversations which played an integral role in the development of the four final conceptual categories. This leads into the introductory section of the conversation.

4.8   The Conversation begins

The fictional setting of this conversation is an imagined teachers' professional development training workshop. It is a large room where the teachers sit around in a circle of chairs. They have been provided with morning tea, but unlike most professional development there is no facilitator in the room. The teachers know they are there to talk about their experiences of, and thoughts about SRE teaching, and they willingly share with one another. This is not an unlikely scenario, as the participants loved talking and writing about their experiences in their interviews and journal entries respectively. Each of the constructed conversations is formed around one of the four conceptual categories and incorporates data from the interviews and journal entries.[29]

The SRE teachers enter the room and choose a seat. They don't all know each other, although some have met over the years at other SRE events. They share a common interest that for some is a passion. While they are all SRE teachers, they are not a homogeneous group. There are men and women; old and young; some are employed as SRE teachers, others volunteer; some have theological trainings, others have education training, some have no formal training at all. Some come from rural settings, others come from cities; some are from Victoria while others are from New South Wales; they are all Christians although they come from a variety of denominations. One teacher has taught SRE for over forty years, and two are in their first year of teaching.

The room fills with conversation as the more outgoing teachers introduce themselves and start chatting. Some of the quieter teachers sit back and watch. Gradually, an expectant quiet fills the room; something is about to happen. The teachers look around for a leader, but there is no one; this is their space and these are their voices.

The oldest person in the room is first to speak. He sips from a fine china cup and rests it on its saucer as he speaks, "good morning everyone, my name is Joshua. I have been teaching for twenty nine years and I am ninety one years old. I teach SRE because I love

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[29] A few formatting decisions were made to maintain the conversational tone in these chapters. Firstly, the teachers' actual words from the data are displayed in italics. Where I used teachers' ideas that were not directly quoted from the data, normal text is used. I also corrected grammatical errors where they reduced the clarity of the conversations. In addition, although the Victorian teachers talk about CRE, and New South Wales teachers talk about Scripture, for clarity I chose to use the term 'SRE' in the conversations.

giving *children the opportunity to hear the good news of Jesus that they might not hear*. This is the way God wants me to serve Him. *I first taught SRE in the sixties when my children were at school. I had four children and a busy architectural practice.* I have taught from kindergarten to year six."

An old woman starts to laugh cheekily. "I thought I was going to be the oldest person here today, but your ninety one years puts me in second place. My name is Mary and I'm eighty one years old. I do beat you in how long I've been teaching though, I have been teaching for forty three years. I teach because *the children need God in their lives so much."*

A few people in the group spontaneously clap Mary. Then everyone joins in. She smiles, "of course, it is not me you should clap; it is the Holy Spirit who keeps me going."

A young woman smiles and waves to the group, "hi I'm Elissa, and I guess I'm the youngest person in the room. I'm 22; so there's nearly 70 years between Joshua and me. I am the children's minister at my church and part of my job is teaching SRE at the local school. I teach Kindergarten and year 6. Not one of the Kindergarten kids I taught this year *had ever heard the name of Jesus, none of them went to church and none of them had heard about it, and that was mind boggling.*"

"The rest of us come somewhere in between the two of you," observes another young woman. "How about we go around the circle and introduce ourselves. I'm Patricia and I've been teaching SRE for one and a half years. I'm finishing up at the end of the year though; I've been training to be a high school teacher and I start my first teaching job next year."

"And I'm Patricia's aunty," says the woman sitting next to her. "My name is Alicia. Although I helped Patricia get started teaching SRE, I always learn so much from watching her teach. I've been teaching for about twenty three years."

"Hi, I'm Lisa. Up until a few years ago I was working in nuclear medicine. One of the best things about my job was training students. I loved *teaching and imparting knowledge and equipping them to be the best they could be.* Four years ago, because of that, I decided to retrain as a teacher. That's when I started teaching SRE. I go to the same church as Elissa."

A man shifts in his chair and painfully searches for a more comfortable position, "I'm Daniel, I live just out of a small country town and I've been teaching in the local school for

the past nine years. I don't have a paid job, so I have plenty of time for teaching. I believe i*t's important to give children the chance to know the gospel early in their life so they can make wise choices throughout their life.* Having God in your heart, it's so important. It's like *a little boy and he has a kite, and he's unreeling the kite and it's going up and up and up. Eventually the kite goes out of sight because it goes into the clouds and yet he's got hold of the string, and someone says 'how do you know it's there.' And the boy says 'Because I can feel the tug on the line,' and that's what it's like to have God in your heart.*

A tall woman who has brought a tray of delicious looking slice to share, smiles and introduces herself, "I'm Julia and I'm married to Daniel. I'm so happy I could be here with you all. I work full time and didn't know if I'd be able to make it. I teach two primary school classes in the town where I work. I teach in my flexitime. No-one else at the office wants Friday mornings off, so it is a good time for me to teach. *Every now and then I'd rather stay at work, but I think 'No this is my commitment. It doesn't feel like a sacrifice. It just seems valuable to be doing it.*"

A tall man with a bandanna leans forward in his seat. His motor bike leathers and helmet are under his chair, "I'm Bart. I'm a youth and children's minister and I coordinate the SRE in my area. I mainly run assembly style SRE with loads of kids, but this year I've been teaching a year five/six class. It's a big group; there are thirty three kids in the room and not enough chairs to go around."

"My name is Michelle and I've been teaching SRE and training teachers since I retired from being a school principal. I teach SRE in a large prep to year ten school of about fifteen hundred students. There are nine year five and six classes and I'm the only teacher for them.   Each term, I combine three of the classes and teach them as one group. I'm fortunate, I have a great working relationship with the principal and she gives me an hour a week for the lessons. I keep teaching SRE because *it's probably one of the most prominent ways that we can provide for the kids to hear about Jesus. I'm worried that in this day and age nothing, or not a lot, is being carried on by this generation of parents*. It's my *mark of service; as a mark for showing my love and respect* to God."

A woman with a big smile and a big laugh chimes in, "I'm Nicole and I teach six classes a week. *I think it's really important for kids to know there's someone out there who's big and strong and powerful. Someone who loves them; has a good plan for them no matter*

what is going on in their lives; can help them; and wants to relate to them and talk to them." She pauses for a moment, her face shines with joy and she adds, "*I believe it. That's why I also coordinate the children's and family ministry at my church. Oh and I know Michelle, she is always a great help to me.*"

"I know Michelle as well. My name is Beth. I'm a Christian who has been baptised in the Holy Spirit. My husband and I spend most of our week teaching SRE. *God has given us such a heart for children to know about Him.* Between us we teach twenty five classes; I teach twelve of them. We've been teaching SRE for twenty years. We teach a lot because a very small percentage of children go to church and they're not hearing about God anywhere else. And when we're not teaching SRE we deliver day old bread from bread shops to needy families, sometimes the families of the children we teach." Beth turns to the woman sitting next to her, "you've been teaching for about twenty years as well haven't you Avril?"

"Nineteen years. I guess it is a long time. The *children don't seem to mind. One little kindergarten child said you look like my grandmother. I just want them to enjoy SRE and like to see me each week.*" There is a pause as the group waits for her to say more.

When she doesn't, the young fit looking woman sitting next to Avril begins to speak. She smiles and the stud in her tongue is just visible. "Hi everyone, I'm Ruby. I have only been teaching for one year. I work as a children's and youth minister at an urban city church. I only started teaching SRE because it was part of my job, but now I really like it. SRE is a place *where kids who don't hear about Jesus in their everyday life with their families* can hear about Jesus. *We've got an opportunity and we need to grasp it.* I haven't taught in school before, but my theological training really helps me."

A woman with a silky voice introduces herself next, "I'm Jane. Like everyone here, I want children who have no background to learn about God, His love for them and how Jesus died for them. I never expected to teach SRE, in fact when started working at my church I told them that I wouldn't do it. *I thought I'm not a teacher. But I did it; it made me sick for weeks and weeks. I don't know what happened; it's been the greatest compelling for Christ.*"

"And now you're doing a wonderful job," an older woman encourages Jane. "I'm Shirley, I'm new to SRE teaching, but not so new to teaching. I recently retired after 40 years of teaching music and then Christian Studies in secondary schools. I now teach a

Kindergarten and year four class each week. *It is hard work,"* Shirley laughs, *"and there are lot of easier ways to fill in time, but I don't think we can allow ourselves the privilege or the pleasure of not teaching it."*

A man in his thirties introduces himself to the group. "I'm Stephen and I'm a minister in a church on the outskirts of the city. Like everyone else, I think teaching SRE is really important. I have a *natural passion to take this opportunity because there are so many non-Christian students and families who are happy to say 'Yes' to SRE.* I teach four different age groups. I teach the same lesson but modify it for each class."

A lean man takes his leather hat off and puts on the ground on top of his jacket. "I'm John. I am a minister at an inner city church. I've been teaching for fifteen years. I teach in the two schools in my parish, and I probably have the distinction of having the smallest classes. The year five and six class at one school has four students and the year three to year six at the other school has five students. I teach SRE because although *Deuteronomy*[30] *is all about the home and kids learning all about the Lord from the home; these kids aren't getting it at home."*

The room is filled with nodding agreement. "That's what keeps me teaching," says a well dressed woman in her late thirties. "I'm Pearl. *When you consider that less than five percent* of children *are ever going to darken the door of a church, and the majority will only come at Christmas and Easter, then you have to go back to the basics of faith, you really do.* I've been teaching SRE for five years. *I'm very motivated because I have a sense of God's call over the years. I had always felt very much drawn to SRE, but I didn't have the availability with kids and whatever and then a time came when the green light went on."*

"I'm Cathy. I work fulltime in Christian ministry. I've been teaching children for 3 years. Before this I worked with university students and women. What motivates me is that *often kids don't have Christian parents and have not heard the gospel before they go to SRE.* You know, I offered a bible to boy who was really interested, but he said 'no, my parents wouldn't like that'.

"But they are supportive of SRE, aren't they?" interrupts Bart. "*It's surprising the number of kids who have supportive parents, because* when we offered bibles *they wrote a*

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[30] The fifth book of the Old Testament in the Bible.

note for their kids to have a bible. But they don't know much about Christianity; *they come up with some really weird ideas."* Bart hesitates, "sorry, I'll try not to interrupt till we've finished the introductions."

A quietly spoken woman with a broken arm introduces herself. "I'm Eleanor. It saddens me that some children have only heard of Jesus as a swear word. When I do prison visiting I *hear all sorts of things that happen to families through the stresses of unemployment, drugs and that gives me empathy for this sea of faces. You don't know what's going on behind the scenes.* I wish I could be more of an influence. That's why I've been teaching SRE for thirteen years and why I'll keep teaching SRE. I love children, I love listening to their ideas."

A woman drinks from a bottle of Coke, glances at the empty seat next to her and tentatively speaks. "I guess it's my turn. I'm Renee. I don't like talking in groups like this, but I love teaching SRE. I've taught for ten years and at the moment I'm in six different schools. *My pure aim is to get them to know Jesus, to know the truth, to know the bible, to know there are two ways to live."*

A small woman runs into the room and sits down on the vacant chair. She turns off her mobile phone and drops it in her bag. "Sorry, I'm late. The babysitter was late arriving."

"We're just introducing ourselves," explains Shirley. The woman smiles, "hi, I'm Nerida. I've been teaching for a long time, but only started teaching SRE a few years ago when I had children. You've probably already said this, but *there are plenty of people out there who wouldn't know anything about Jesus if there wasn't SRE in schools. It's such an amazing opportunity to teach something that will make a different to their lives so profoundly."*

Everyone nods in agreement and Alicia gets up and makes Nerida a cup of tea. Julia passes around the slice she has made and a few others get up and get drink refills. For a moment an awkward silence descends as people wait for someone to take the lead. Then lots of people start talking at once. Bart raises his hand and everyone quietens and looks toward him. He is not surprised by this; Bart is used to commanding an audience. "We all have so much to say, how about we try to be a bit systematic about this conversation? Let's go through the issues that we all know are important."

The group agrees to the suggestion and the conversation begins.

CHAPTER FIVE: GUEST AND HOST

The SRE teachers' experiences of hospitality strongly influence their pedagogy. They experience hospitality in three ways. Firstly, they are guests of the public schools where they teach. Although they are not members of the school staff, they are recipients of the school's hospitality that gives them a space in the timetable and a classroom space to teach about their faith.
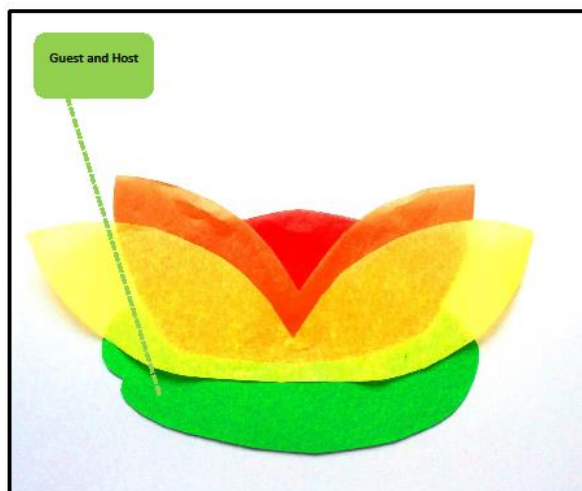
Secondly, as they teach in another teacher's classroom, they experience being a guest of the classroom teacher[31] whose room they are using. Thirdly, as they teach and welcome students into their lessons, their experience of hospitality changes as they become hosts to their students. These three experiences shape their teaching and are mediated by their belief that God is a hospitable God who welcomes and loves all people. I have called this aspect of SRE pedagogy *Guest and Host* and placed it on the green outer layer of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus because the SRE teachers' guest and host relationships shape the distinctiveness of SRE and act as a cuticle, or constraining layer from which all other aspects of SRE pedagogy grow.

In this study, SRE pedagogy is defined as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from, and shaped by, many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied. The SRE teachers' experiences of being a guest and host, and belief in a hospitable God who welcomes all people, are integral to the distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy. Their experience of hospitality in the schools where they teach is complex. They are guests of the school and the classroom teacher where they teach, and they are hosts to the students they teach. They are also hosts in the sense that they believe they are mediators of God's welcome to their students. It is their personal experience of God's welcome that compels them to return to teach SRE each week regardless of the welcome they receive. Much of their pedagogy

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[31] I use the term "classroom teacher" to describe the professional teacher who teaches in the classroom where SRE takes place.

originates in their relationship with God and is manifest in the reality of the potentially inhospitable environment of the public school classroom. The distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy is derived from this guest/host tension and influences the SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability and authority discussed in Chapter Six, the way they bring truth and hope to their classrooms discussed in Chapter Seven, and their emphasis on relational teaching discussed in Chapter Eight.

Analysis of the data from the interviews and journals led to the construction of nine focused codes that ultimately led to the construction of the conceptual code *Guest and Host*. The nine focused codes were: (i) being a guest; (ii) being different to classroom teaching; (iii) being different to other teaching; (iv) being flexible; (v) being out of my control; (vi) developing a relationship with the school; (vii) having a classroom teacher in the room; (viii) having enough time; and (ix) opting in or opting out. These focused codes were used in the construction of the category of being a guest that finally led to the construction of the conceptual code *Guest and Host*. While on the surface these codes may appear to bear little relationship with the notion of hospitality inherent in the conceptual code of *Guest and Host,* these codes highlight the complex and fragile nature of being a teacher in another's space. Although both SRE and classroom teachers teach in a classroom with a curriculum and the incumbent expectations of student participation and engagement, the SRE teachers' guest status results in a different experience. As guests in a school, there are many aspects of their teaching that are *out of their control* and they need to *be flexible* because they are not always afforded with optimal teaching spaces or informed about events or activities that can influence their teaching. Unlike most classroom teachers, as guests, they often have the "owner" of the classroom (*the classroom teacher) in the room* while they teach which can influence how they teach. They also recognise that like any good guest, they need to work at *developing a relationship with the school* principal, office staff and other classroom teachers who host them. In addition, the amount of time they have with their students, and their students' right to opt out of their classes are also the result of the guest/host relationships they have when they teach SRE. Constructing the conversation was integral to the analytical process in the construction of the conceptual code of *Guest and Host;* the conversation can be found in the Appendix 5.1. In addition, Appendix 5.2 shows the movement from focused codes to conceptual category in the analysis process.

In the iterative process of analysis in constructivist grounded theory, coding moves the data from initial codes to conceptual categories. It is interesting to note that in the construction of the conceptual category of *Guest and Host* there were less focused codes than the other conceptual categories (there are eighteen focused codes in *Vulnerability and Authority,* thirty four in *Truth and Hope,* and fourteen in *Relational Teaching)*; and only one category rather than the three or four constructed in the other conceptual categories. Rather than indicating that less was spoken about the teachers' experiences and beliefs about hospitality, it suggests a consensus about the importance of SRE teachers' experiences of hospitality for understanding the foundational nature of *Guest and Host* in SRE pedagogy. Experiences and beliefs about being guests and hosts permeated the SRE teachers' discussions; in addition, nineteen of the twenty three SRE teachers explicitly describe their experiences of hospitality in the schools where they teach: twelve record positive experiences and seven have negative experiences. In the rest of this introductory section of the chapter I briefly introduce Derrida's writing on hospitality and describe the distinctive context of SRE that helps to explicate the nature of these relationships before discussing the SRE teachers' specific experiences of being guests and hosts in more depth in the rest of the chapter.

Derrida's writing on hospitality provides a helpful way of understanding the various guest and host experiences of the SRE teachers because of his emphasis on the asymmetry of hospitality relationships, and particularly on a guest's dependence on the goodwill of the hosts whose thresholds s/he crosses. Derrida (2000b, p. 4) describes the different relationships that may exist between guests and hosts and defines hospitality as inviting and welcoming the stranger who is "treated as a friend or ally, as opposed to the stranger treated as an enemy". He uses the construct of personal hospitality (2000a, 2000b, 2005; Derrida & Caputo, 1997) to explore welcoming strangers across individual and national borders and emphasises the difference between conditional and unconditional hospitality that are discussed more fully later in the chapter. Hospitality covers a wide range of micro and macro relationships. As such, hospitality can be understood in relation to "crossing thresholds including those between self and other, private and public, inside and outside, individual and collective, personal and political, emotional and rational, generous and economic" (Still, 2010, p. 4). Derrida's work has influenced the philosophical and political debate regarding the movement of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants (Still, 2010), and has been used for understanding issues as diverse as academic mobility across institutions (Kenway &

Fahey, 2009), nurses doing home visits (Oresland, Maatta, Norberg, Jorgensen, & Lutzen, 2008), Indian hospitality (George, 2009), and education (Hung, 2013b).

Hung (2013a, 2013b) is helpful because she (along with others) guides the reader of Derrida to think about hospitality in education, and in particular, the stranger who is a guest. In her article *Educational hospitality and trust in teacher-student relationships: A Derridarian visiting* (2013b), Hung focuses on classroom teaching and points out that any student that comes into a classroom is a stranger or outsider that the teacher must decide how best to welcome. She asks "How can a teacher treat her students with hospitality as much as possible?" (2013b, p. 87). While hospitality is often discussed by Derrida from the viewpoint of the host, Hung (2013a, p. 441) picks up on the "strangeness" of the stranger:

> When one grows old, gets ill, or goes to foreign countries or enters into any remote area where people live with different languages, traditions, practices, customs or religions… One finds oneself a stranger… When a stranger who cannot speak our language comes into our territory, do we take her [sic] as an intruder or a guest? Do we treat her with hostility or hospitality, indifference or care?

In this way she acknowledges that both the student and the teacher can potentially be strangers depending upon the situation. As guests, SRE teachers are strangers because they speak the language of faith in a public school where this is not the lingua franca. As hosts, SRE teachers (like other teachers) welcome their students regardless of their differing religious practices or beliefs. Thus, while Derrida and Hung do not specifically explore SRE pedagogy, Derrida provides a useful paradigm for understanding SRE teachers' particular experience of hospitality both as a guest and a host.

As I indicated in the introductory chapters, the particularity of the SRE teachers' experience is partially due to the distinctive curricular, historical and legislative context within which SRE is taught. Although SRE is "an integral part of school activities, taking place in school hours and under the jurisdiction of the school" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013, p. 4), SRE is set apart from other school activities and SRE teachers "cross the threshold" as guests of the public schools where they teach. However, this has not always been the case. As was discussed in Chapter One, the Church of England ran the earliest schools in colonial Australia and all students participated in daily lessons on the catechism of the Church of England (Bubacz, 2008) that were taught by the classroom teachers. Therefore the classroom teachers who taught these lessons were not guests as they were teaching in their space. However, in addition to the religious instruction

that was given to all students (King, 1966) by the classroom teachers, Church of England and Roman Catholic clergy also gave classes in tenets of their particular denomination. These clergymen would have therefore been the first teachers of religious education to be guests rather than hosts when they taught. By the early 1900s the responsibility for running schools in NSW and Victoria had shifted to the state and classroom teachers no longer taught religious education. The NSW Public Instruction Act of 1880 allowed visiting religious education teachers to teach during school hours, and the Victorian government allowed SRE teachers before the official start of the school day in 1904. It is at this point that SRE teachers would have had to cross the threshold; the time when they became guests in schools. However, their position would have been different to today's SRE teachers because their teaching represented the hegemonic religious belief of the time. This is illustrated by comparing the 1911 and 2011 Census results about religious belief. In 1911, 95% of Australians reported that they were Christian and 0.4% reported they had no religion. In contrast, in 2011, 42% of respondents reported being Catholics or Anglicans, 22% reported having no religion, and smaller numbers reported being of other faiths (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

Finally, the legislative context of SRE also influences its distinctive nature. To some degree the relationships between SRE teachers and the public schools are determined by the legislation that allows SRE teachers to cross the threshold into public schools. Under this legislation, both the schools and SRE teachers must behave in a particular way and adhere to certain conditions based on their specific roles, rights and obligations. For example, the NSW Department of Education and Communities (2013) states that school principals are responsible for allowing time in school hours for SRE, ensuring that only authorised teachers teach SRE, and providing for not less than thirty minutes and no more than one hour of meaningful teaching time per week. In addition, principals and teachers retain duty of care for students and can intervene with behaviour management where necessary. The providers of SRE also have a responsibility to ensure that SRE teachers do not have a criminal conviction for a crime against a minor, violence, sexual assault, or the provision of prohibited drugs; to provide training for SRE teachers; to keep the school informed of the names and contact details of authorised teachers; and to provide authorised teaching material and make curriculum scope and sequence documents accessible on a website. How these legislative directives are interpreted and implemented differ from school to school, that is, each school

determines the nature of the hospitality that is afforded to the SRE teachers as they cross the threshold.

There are aspects of SRE teaching that closely align it to other classroom teaching. Like classroom teachers, unless the SRE teachers are teaching in a non-classroom space such as the assembly hall, the classroom is set up in the same way for both SRE teachers and classroom teachers. In fact, due to the time restrictions of SRE, there is limited time to reorganise a classroom and SRE teachers teach with whatever classroom arrangement their hosting teacher provides. Like their classroom teaching counterparts, they teach from a curriculum and work within the confines of a school timetable. They also expect their students to participate in their lessons and behave in ways that are appropriate to a classroom. Due to these similarities there are times in the SRE teachers' interviews and journals when their descriptions closely align with classroom teaching pedagogy. However, it is the complex set of circumstances that make the guest/host relationship so distinctive in SRE that influences SRE pedagogy in particular ways. The teachers' experience of being a guest both in the school and the classroom is an excellent example of this distinctiveness. Although both SRE teachers and classroom teachers are hosts to the students they welcome into their classrooms, this similarity is tempered by the freedom that students have to choose whether or not they attend SRE.

As guests of the school and the classroom teacher, SRE teachers teach in a space that is not their own and have to work within the constraints of a host/guest hospitality relationship. This is captured by Jane when she explains that:

> *We're guests, we're volunteers. If the teacher is in the classroom, it doesn't matter how nice the teacher is, I feel very much like I am the guest and my teaching is very different when they are there.*

Beth describes how as a guest at the school she and the SRE teachers are "*always welcome, we're well accepted there*". Secondly, the SRE teachers are guests in the classrooms where they teach. Thirdly, the SRE teachers experience being hosts as they welcome their students into their classrooms. For example, Avril describes how she chooses to teach extra classes so that she can welcome as many students as possible to SRE. She explains that

> *I'm supposed to cut back [the number of classes I teach]. If I could find the volunteers I would. But I find them and then they pull out. I could do with another teacher, [but] what do I do? Do I let [the children] go or do I just do it?*

Finally, many of the SRE teachers express the belief that God is like a host who welcomes them. For example, Jane describes how she wants her students to remember that *"God loves them and welcomes them back [to Him]"*.

Similar to Derrida's (2000b, p. 4) definition of hospitality as inviting and welcoming the stranger as a friend or ally, George (2009, p. 29) defines hospitality as the "cordial reception of and disposition towards guests and visitors". These definitions allow for two different kinds of guests: those who are invited and expected, and those who are unexpected. Extending hospitality to a known and expected guest is "not a particularly demanding task" (Ruitenberg, 2005, p. 19), whereas offering hospitality to the unexpected guest can be like welcoming a stranger. Although these definitions of hospitality emphasise the role of the host and the SRE teachers' experience of hospitality is more commonly as Hung's (2013a, 20113b) "stranger" guest than host, they still provide insight into the SRE teachers' experiences.

5.1   Derrida's law and laws of hospitality

Hospitality is extended to SRE teachers when they cross the threshold of the public schools where they teach. The SRE teachers are "expected" and schools make room for them in their timetable and give them a space to teach. However, in a sense they are also "uninvited" because it is not the individual school that invites SRE teachers to come. SRE teachers can cross the threshold of public schools because of legislative acts that allow them this privilege. The individual school will determine how they are welcomed; whether they are viewed as friends and allies, or strangers and enemies. The experience of the SRE teachers in this study reflects these different types of hospitality.

Derrida describes hospitality as "an antinomy, a tension between two equally imperative laws but without opposition" (Derrida, 2005, p. 7) and differentiates between the law of hospitality and the laws of hospitality. The *law* of hospitality is a limitless and unconditional hospitality where "anyone can come at any time and can come in without needing a key for the door" (Derrida, 2000a, p. 14). That is, there is no pressure for the guest to behave in a particular way (Telfer, 2000). The law of hospitality is an ideal to aspire to. It is an openness towards the guest that means regardless of what s/he brings to the relationship, no conditions of occupation are given (Derrida, 2000b; P. Patton, 2004). There is a "welcome without reserve and without calculation, an exposure without limit to whoever arrives"

(Derrida, 2005, p. 6). Derrida acknowledges that such an absolute hospitality is an impossible ideal because hospitality is always conditional. However, it is something that he believes should guide and direct all expressions of conditional hospitality.

Derrida contrasts the law of hospitality with *laws* of hospitality. Reflecting the way we actually do hospitality, these laws are conditional and limited. Conditional hospitality and its incumbent laws of hospitality provide both the host and guest or guests who are crossing the threshold with specific roles, rights and obligations (Hung, 2013b) . Reynolds (2010, p. 179) describes the host as "one who dwells safely "at home" who makes space within the home for the presence of another". In offering hospitality, the host chooses who to welcome, how long they can stay and what they can do while they are guests (Westmoreland, 2008). Even when the host invites a guest to make him/herself at home,

> this is a self-limiting invitation. "Make yourself at home" means: please feel at home, act as if you were at home, but, remember, that is not true, this is not your home but mine, and you are expected to respect my property. When I say "welcome" to the other, "Come across my threshold," I am not surrendering my property or my identity.

> (Derrida & Caputo, 1997, p. 111).

Asymmetrical power relationships are inherent in hospitality (Derrida, 2000a). Whenever a guest is invited to cross the threshold, go through the door and inside, a subtle, unequal power relationship is implied (Hung, 2013b).This is because the existence of the threshold and door "means that someone has the key to them and consequently controls the conditions of hospitality" (Derrida, 2000a, p. 14). To be hospitable, "one must have the power to host"'(Kenway & Fahey, 2009, p. 555) and the guest is reminded of his/her powerlessness because of the host's mastery and sovereignty over him/her. Regardless of how generous and welcoming the host is, "the welcoming gesture effectively says: "You are permitted to come and I shall thereby grant you some of *my* space and time, for I *rightfully belong here"* (Langmann, 2011, p. 339) and you don't. The host retains his/her power and sovereignty by saying "you are welcome if you…" and because s/he has the right of exclusion or at very least actions of welcome, or lack of welcome. As such the host can only be the host because s/he is the master of the "space and goods he [sic] offers or opens to the other" (Derrida, 2000a, p. 14). For SRE teachers, the relationships they have with their schools act as reminders of the host's mastery and sovereignty over them regardless of whether this mastery is expressed with a generous or hostile welcome.

This power asymmetry is evident in many of the SRE teachers' experiences as revealed in the following four examples. Firstly, they are not always given appropriate spaces to teach their classes. Nerida explains that

The space that you're given [to teach in] is one thing that is out of your control and sometimes that is really pathetic and not conducive to learning.

Secondly, the SRE teachers are not always informed when their classes are cancelled. Stephen describe how:

Sometimes [the school is] slack in not calling us as they should because they've cancelled a lesson for an excursion. Sometimes it makes you a bit cynical and unfairly negative that they don't want you there.

Thirdly, many of the SRE teachers are reminded that they are guests when they have to ask permission to use the classroom resources. Ruby describes how it is helpful when the *"school is on board"* because she can *"ask for things that help you teach better".* At one school this meant asking for "*a classroom with desks rather than being in the drama room".* Many teachers also feel they have to ask permission to use resources in the classroom. For example, Jane shows an awareness of this when she explains that "*if the teacher doesn't want to teach me [how to use] the smart board, she doesn't have to".* Finally, the classroom teachers do not always give up "mastery" of the space. For example, Shirley describes one lesson where:

The lesson ran smoothly, which meant that we all could ignore the two ignorant teachers having a loud conference in the room for half the lesson. Due to [this] problem children at the back weren't fully involved. I couldn't blame them.

Although the legislative context allows for the SRE teachers to cross the threshold into public schools, the schools and classroom teachers determine the nature of the welcome that the SRE teachers receive. By their actions and attitudes, the schools retain power and sovereignty.

In sum, Derrida's description of the unconditional law of hospitality and the conditional laws of hospitality is helpful for exploring the SRE teachers' experiences of being guests and hosts. For Derrida unconditional hospitality occurs when the stranger (guest) crosses the threshold and is treated as a friend. However, as this is an ideal to aspire to, most hospitality is conditional where the guest and host have roles, rights and obligations and "making yourself at home" is conditional on the host-imposed limits. In this conditional hospitality there is asymmetry in the relationships as the host determines what can and cannot

be done by the guest. This understanding of hospitality is helpful for understanding the SRE teachers' experience of (i) being a guest in the school; (ii) being a guest in the classroom; and (iii) their experience of being a host to the students they teach. Their belief that God is a host also influences their experience of being a host to their students. These three situations are discussed in the following sections.

5.2   Being a guest of the school

The SRE teachers' experiences of hospitality are different to those of classroom teachers. Much of the literature on hospitality in teaching (for example, Haswell, Haswell, & Blalock, 2009; Hung, 2013b; Smith & Carvill, 2000) assumes that the teacher is the host and the students are the guests. However, in SRE, the teachers are both guests and hosts. They are the guests of the classroom teacher and the school, and they are hosts to the students. As guests, they are humbly reliant on the welcome that they are offered and how the laws of hospitality are played out in their situation. If it is positive, they are welcome to the resources of the school and are supported in their teaching. In contrast, in a less welcoming environment, they have to accept the classrooms they are allocated even when they are inappropriate, make do with whatever they can carry in to the lesson and accept the intervention of the classroom teacher even when it is not welcome.

The laws of hospitality are expressed differently in different schools. This means that the nature of the hospitality that the SRE teachers experience differs from school to school and cannot be generalised for a particular type of school. For example, Renee and Julia who are working in rural and city fringe schools, and Eleanor and Beth who teach in large suburban schools[32], receive a positive welcome that Eleanor describes as "*very accepting*". Beth explains that the SRE teachers are *"always welcome to come to the staff room and have a cuppa"*. Renee explains that the schools where she teaches have a positive view of the church

> *… so it's easy to slot in. The school uses our church for their end of year things. We're still living in a village type* of world and *the church is still a big part. Anything that is on at the school, the minister gets invited to anything that is important. They are very much that way. The minister is still someone who is regarded as important.*

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[32] Beth teaches in three schools: 2 large suburban schools with over 500 students and a small rural school of 34 students.

Renee's experience is one of reciprocal hospitality. The laws of hospitality are enhanced by the relationship that the school has with the church. That is, the school is hospitable to the SRE teachers partially because they have received hospitality from the church. In addition, because of the community's positive view of the church evident by the minister being invited to important events, the school chooses to offer hospitality to the SRE teachers. This is the cordial hospitality that George (2009) describes, where the teachers are treated like friends or allies rather than enemies. As known and expected guests, the hospitality relationship in this school is, in the words of Ruitenberg (2005, p. 19) "not a particularly demanding task".

This positive experience of hospitality contrasts with the experience of Ruby and Nicole who both experience a less generous welcome in the schools where they teach. Ruby describes the welcome she receives as non-existent where there is

> *…a real lack of support and involvement from the schools. I'm not given a class roll and I'm dumped in a classroom with no teacher support, and they couldn't care less.*

However, when she asks for some extra support from one of the schools that was *"particularly hostile last year"* the relationship improved and she was able to make herself more "at home".

> *I made a point of calling the deputy [principal] before the school year started and I met with him and spoke to him about some of the challenges, just in a positive way, that I found in the classroom last year. And said it would be really great if I had xyz: if I had a classroom with desks rather than being in the drama room; if there was a teacher in the room because of the size of the classes. And he has given me all of these things.*

Ruby's action recognises the power asymmetry in her relationship with the school. She knows that she cannot simply take what she wants but must ask the deputy principal for some extra things that will make teaching easier. She is also careful about how she asks, describing how she asked in *"a positive way"*. This contrasts to Nicole's description of being "*at loggerheads about what is right"* with the principal at one of the schools where she teaches. Although the legislative context dictates that the schools must allow the SRE teachers into the school, the way that this is actualized differs according to the welcoming gesture made by the school.

Lisa's experience of wanting to give an interested student extra material to take home illustrates the asymmetry in her guest relationship with the school. She was told that she could not send the material home unless the parents gave permission for it to be sent home. In the process of getting this permission she explains that the principal:

> *… was a real stumbling block. I had to write a permission note and [the school] wasn't happy with it and I had to rewrite it by next week… The permission note had to go home, the parents had to sign it and send it back. [We suggested] send a note saying we are sending this home and email us if you don't want your child to receive it. But [the school] said 'no, don't do that', then the permission was switched around so the parent had to opt in and we had to wait for the note to come back.*

Lisa's experience reveals the type of hospitality that she receives. It is not the welcome without reserve or limit that Derrida describes in the law of hospitality. By imposing restrictions and conditions on sending the extra material home the school gave conditional hospitality. It is interesting to note that there are no direct references to what a school should do when an SRE teacher wants to send additional material home from SRE in either the New South Wales or Victorian education departments' policies on SRE (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013; Victorian Deparament of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2014). Lisa's school was not compelled by legislation to take the approach they took; but this is how this particular school chose to respond to this request. In contrast, sending material home is a non-issue to John who mentions in passing how he sends a copy of the Lords' Prayer home with his students and that

> *… some of [the students], I know it because I hear it from their parents, do pray it at the end of the day. Some of them won't go to sleep unless they pray it with their parents.*

Although many of the SRE teachers have a positive and welcoming experience at the schools where they teach, their words reveal awareness that this is not always the case. While Julia describes the schools as welcoming because of the sense of community in a rural school, when she says "*it's not hard to walk into school, especially when you've been doing it a few years. No one is hostile,*" she indicates that this hospitality cannot be taken for granted. That is, walking into school to teach SRE could be initially hard, hostile and difficult. The conditionality of the hospitality is also evident when Renee says that at the end of the school year she gives a gift to the schools *"to thank them for <u>allowing</u> us to teach"* (my underline). Renee and Julia's experience of hospitality is positive and friendly, they can make themselves at home. However it is still an experience of the *laws* of

hospitality because it is conditional on existing community relationships and the school allowing them in.

The SRE teachers' awareness of the conditional nature of the hospitality they are offered is evident in their wariness to talk about certain topics in SRE. This decision influences their methodological pedagogy. For example, Joshua points out that in SRE

> *… the devil doesn't get an airing in my classroom. I am there to teach them about the love of God, not the fear of the devil.*

Joshua reveals a careful consideration of what should and should not be taught in SRE. This may be because he understands that as a guest in the school there are some aspects of his faith that may be less acceptable to the hosts, or he may consider it inappropriate content for the students that he is teaching. Either way, he is wary about the appropriateness in this context of some aspects of his faith. This wariness makes him potentially vulnerable as he teaches the truth as he understands it[33]; especially if a student directly asks him what he thinks about the devil. Joshua counters his earlier claim when he says that

> *I might have discussed [the devil] with the sixth graders because they were asking questions, there would be no withdrawal, I would call a spade a spade, I say you can believe this or you can't, I believe this and the facts that I know are those.*

SRE students' parents are also participants in the hospitality that is offered in SRE. For example, Cathy describes how when a boy in her class was very interested in SRE she offered to give him a bible to take home.

> *But he said, 'no my parents wouldn't like that'. Kids have a good understanding of what their parents think and so sometimes that can be a difficult barrier as well.*

In a sense, this boy's parents were also hosts whose welcome needed to be considered before material could be sent home. Although the SRE teachers rarely meet their students' parents, they are aware of their obligation to the parents and the possibility that SRE teaching may challenge the parents' worldviews. In this way the hospitality that the SRE teachers experience is also conditional on an obligation to the parents of the students they teach. Elissa draws attention to this when she says that:

> *we need to keep in mind that there are certain lessons that almost end up disrespecting [parents' beliefs; and] at worse, they can think that it might be brainwashing or that we might try to convert them.*

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[33] These issues of vulnerability and truth are discussed in Chapters Six and Seven respectively.

Renee reveals a tension between the value that she places on respecting the parents of her students, and the importance she places on her belief in the truth of what she teaches when she explains that she does not want to "*discredit the parents*" for believing something different to Christianity, but also does not want to "*let the truth get away".* Renee's statements also highlight the tension between the SRE teachers' desire to proclaim and draw their students to Christian truth and their position as guests in the schools. If they were recipients of unconditional hospitality (the law of hospitality), they could come in at any time and behave in any way they chose. They would be "welcome without reservation and without calculation" (Derrida, 2005, p. 6). Instead, the SRE teachers come in to the schools and the classrooms understanding that they have specific roles, rights and obligations; and that the schools determine how long they can stay and what they can do while they are guests. The SRE teachers receive a conditional welcome from the schools that is also influenced by the value they place on respecting their students' parents. Within this conditional welcome the SRE teachers hope to share with their students their belief that God is welcoming and hospitable. There is also an almost silent tension regarding proselytism in SRE. On the one hand, the SRE teachers believe that there is a spiritual component to their teaching that is expressed in the hope that their students will ultimately *"end up in God's kingdom as a result of [their] teaching"* (Patricia). But on the other hand, the legislation is clear that SRE is not the place for proselytism and this is discussed in Chapter Seven.

Although the SRE teachers do not always use the language of hospitality to describe their experiences, the intentional approach they take to improving the welcome they receive reveals their understanding of the conditional hospitality they experience. Their role as guests is typically a proactive one as they try to move from being a stranger who is treated as an enemy, to a friend or ally. This is not done simply to be friendly guests, but because it makes their job easier. Without this relationship, Nerida explains that there can be "*a negative attitude or a culture that is negative about SRE that filters down to the kids; it's pretty hard to work in with that".* The SRE teachers predominantly approach improving the welcome they receive by working on their relationships with individual teachers, the principal and the office staff. This looks different for different teachers. When Joshua felt that his principal was "*scarcely welcoming"* he made a point of showing an interest in the school to indicate that "*I'm not just an interloper".* In a similar vein, Shirley helps her classroom teacher with playground duty before her SRE lesson, Ruby ensures that she says hello to the school receptionist, and Renee takes in an occasional special morning tea for the school staff to

enjoy. Like good guests, the SRE teachers invest in the relationships they have at school because of the contingent nature of the welcome they receive.

As guests of the school, the SRE teachers must work within the timetable limits that they are afforded. With the exception of Bart and Michelle, all the teachers are challenged by the resulting time limitation of SRE lessons. Although Michelle has been promised sixty minutes to teach in the coming year, the majority of teachers are given thirty minutes a week to teach SRE. Within this limited time, they often report that their lessons are often even shorter for three reasons: (i) because of the distances students have to travel to get to the lesson, (ii) because they have to teach lessons back to back with no time allocated for movement between classrooms, and (iii) because the school shortens their lesson time. For example, at one of the schools where Ruby teaches she was told that because of gymnastics lessons she would have to finish the lesson eight minutes early. She points out that as the students already arrive five minutes late, she is left with a seventeen minute lesson. Although the law of hospitality reflected in legislation directs school principals to provide "not less than thirty minutes and no more than one hour of meaningful teaching time per week" (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013), under the laws of hospitality school principals interpret this directive differently. It is therefore the distinctive legislative context of SRE and the hospitality of the school that determines the timetabling of SRE.

Viewed through a methodological lens, the limited time available to the SRE teachers impacts the way they teach their students. As Metcalfe and Game (2006, p. 75) point out, a teacher needs time to "establish a creative, reliable learning environment in the classroom". Many of them report that they never finish their lessons, Nerida explains how "*Most of the time, I don't even get through everything I've planned"*. Although classroom teachers are also constrained by a full timetable, as guests of the school who are only welcome for the duration of their SRE lesson, SRE teachers cannot return to their lessons later in the day or week. As a result, it is difficult to develop continuity in their teaching. Because of the way that the Teacher Books are organised, the SRE teachers generally believe that they must continue on to a new lesson the following week regardless of whether they complete the previous one. With the pressure to always be moving to the new lesson the following week, Beth tries to get through the lesson by *"talking about what's in the Student Books, I'll hold one up in front of them, but we won't do it",* and Patricia "*sums up what we've learned to fit into the time we have"*. Such a methodology demands that the lesson is, or becomes, teacher

rather than student directed to ensure that all the material is covered[34]. Michelle and Shirley, two retired, experienced classroom teachers choose to slow down their teaching to fit with the needs of the students rather than the call of the Teacher Books. Michelle describes how she assesses the students' learning at the beginning of each lesson and if necessary, repeats a lesson *"because I'm not satisfied that there is any point in going on [with the new lesson]"*. Shirley teaches her lessons over two weeks and observes that *"by taking the time constraint away, I now feel that instead of teaching SRE I'm teaching children"*.

In sum, a distinctive aspect of SRE is that SRE teachers are guests of the schools where they teach. The conditional hospitality that the SRE teachers experience with their schools influences their pedagogy. Regardless of whether the SRE teachers' experience of hospitality is welcoming or hostile, they cannot make themselves completely at home because of the conditional nature of the hospitality that they are offered. For example the SRE teachers choose not to call their students to commit to Christian faith, they often have to ask permission to send material home with their students, they teach from an authorised curriculum, and they are careful about discussing certain issues in their lessons. In these ways they respectfully make themselves at home only as far as the conditional hospitality that is offered allows them. They generally accept the rooms and timetable that they are given and make the most of the time they are given either by taking more than one session to teach a lesson or by speeding through some of the lesson activities. As recipients of the school's hospitality most of the SRE teachers cultivate their relationship by being helpful and polite guests. All of these issues influence their pedagogy, in addition their pedagogy is also influenced by the hospitality they receive from the classroom teachers in the rooms where they teach and it is to these relationships I now turn.

5.3   Being a guest of the classroom teacher

It is not only the SRE teachers' experience of the asymmetrical hospitality of the school that influences their pedagogy. Many of them also experience conditional hospitality whenever they cross the threshold into the classroom. In NSW, although classroom teachers are not required to supervise SRE teachers, they may, with agreement from the SRE teacher or request of the principal, remain in the classroom and, when considered necessary, assist with behaviour management (NSW Department of Education and Communities, 2013).

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[34] This will be more fully discussed in Chapter Seven, Truth and Hope

However, in Victoria, classroom teachers must remain in the classroom and supervise their students when SRE is being taught (Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2012). Fifteen out of twenty three teachers in this study always had a classroom teacher in the room when they taught. Seven SRE teachers either had a classroom teacher in some of their classes, or a classroom teacher who occasionally stayed in the classroom when they taught, and one SRE teacher never had a classroom teacher in the classroom. For many of these SRE teachers, the presence of the classroom teacher influences their pedagogy.

Of the twenty two teachers with a classroom teacher in their room, thirteen are positive about the experience, eight describe some difficulties and one does not mention the classroom teacher. Alicia explains that she is

> *… glad that teachers are in the room. They know the students so they are good for classroom control if they are doing their job.*

In contrast, Renee explains that

> *I find that the class teachers are a problem. Because a lot of scripture teachers don't know how to control a class and they seem to get involved sooner than I want them to do. And I think that's the hardest thing [about SRE].*

For Shirley having the classroom teacher in the classroom "*can be good and it can be bad, but it certainly affects me*".

Immanuel Kant, in his discussion of universal hospitality, comments that a guest must not be treated with hostility "as long as he [sic] peacefully occupies his space, one may not treat him with hostility" (Kant, 1983, p. 118). That is, like the guests in Kant's discussion, who must behave in a way that is acceptable to the host, SRE teachers must accept their classroom teacher's intervention in classroom management and ask for permission to use classroom resources. Regardless of the friendliness of the welcome, this experience is encapsulated in Jane's description of what it means to be a guest:

> *Being a guest, there's no assumptions. I'm not assuming and teaching the lesson as if it's my classroom. We're the guest, we're the volunteer. We have to ask to use things.*

Because they want to retain good relationships in the schools where they teach they work at being "good" guests who behave in a peaceable manner. They are sometimes frustrated at

how their hosts treat them and how this affects their teaching, but they continue in the relationship because teaching SRE is so important to them. Shirley explains this by saying:

> *I'm the visitor and I have to be polite no matter what the interruptions are. I can have three teachers in the room all talking while I'm trying to do my lesson. It's just not fair, certainly not polite.*

The religious beliefs of the classroom teacher can also influence the hospitality experience of the SRE teacher. When the classroom teacher is a Christian, the SRE teachers presume that s/he is supportive of SRE. They often describe a more generous hospitality that is offered to them[35]. In these situations, SRE teachers often describe experiencing a different hospitality where they feel more supported and less wary of the care they must take. Bart describes how when another SRE teacher overstepped the boundary of hospitality at his school, he was able to call upon *"one of the teachers on staff who was a Christian"* who could guide the SRE teacher in *"a better way"* to teach. It may be that Christian classroom teachers are understood to be more like the "family" members that Jane refers to in her comparison of teaching at church and at school. Perhaps this is because although the classroom teacher who is a Christian still has mastery over the classroom, there is a sense that both teachers share an experience of God's hospitality.

When SRE teachers, like Bart, find a classroom teacher who is a Christian there is a meeting of likeness, a sharing in a common spirituality that acts as a modifier on the guest/host relationship. The SRE teacher is no longer Derrida's (2000a, p. 7) "stranger"; someone who is "unknown, where I know nothing of him" but an ally and friend. Several of the SRE teachers comment on this experience; Nicole describes how the *"whole atmosphere will be quite different"* when there is a *"Christian principal who is one hundred percent behind you"*. Similarly, Daniel describes the teaching principal in his classroom as a Christian who *"trusts us to do what we do, I haven't had a problem in that class"*. Interestingly, Jane has a similar experience with a Jewish classroom teacher who

> *has half an ear on what is going on. She might pop up with something. I couldn't remember someone from the Old Testament and she gave the name. She's there."*

In contrast, Patricia is aware of the "stranger-ness" of her relationship with the classroom teacher who doesn't agree with her beliefs so that

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[35] It is important to note that it is not only Christian teachers who are supportive of the SRE teachers. Many SRE teachers report the generous help and support of classroom teachers who are not Christians.

When the kids are asking me curly questions, I see [the classroom teacher] look up and then she nods and goes back to what she is doing. There isn't the camaraderie that can sometimes happen.

Because the classroom is not the SRE teachers' "house", they must work within the constraints imposed by the classroom teacher. This can be as simple as not being able to choose how the classroom furniture is organised. As Bart explains:

I don't get to set or address my own space, can't add to it over a period of time, everything has to be portable, get up put down, everything is rushed, given the limitations I try to do the best I can.

As guests in the classroom the SRE teachers are also not privy to, or in control of, everything that happens. For example, Shirley describes a time when she didn't know why a girl cried all the way through her lesson; similarly Pearl describes not knowing why a girl had been placed in the "thinking spot" by the classroom teacher and left there when SRE began.

When the classroom teacher remains in the classroom during the SRE lesson, the teaching space is shared. In this insecure place of welcome, the SRE teachers are vulnerable to how hospitality is extended to them and to what the classroom teacher chooses to do. As guests in the classrooms many of the SRE teachers are not given full responsibility for managing the behaviour of their students. For example, Lisa explains that she has the support of the classroom teacher and *"that makes a massive difference"*. She said that when she starts to teach, the classroom teacher says to the students *'you have to listen and be on your best behavior. I'm going to ask [the SRE teacher] how you were'*. Similarly, Julia explains that *"if there are discipline problems, the classroom teacher usually deals with it. They keep an eye on it"*. There are some SRE teachers who believe that their classroom teachers intervene too quickly in managing behavior. For example, Patricia describes how she believes she has a more relaxed approach than the classroom teacher.

There are a couple of boys talking at the back, I know they are still kind of listening to me because they will respond now and again and if it's not a particularly vital part of the lesson I kind of let that go. And sometimes the teacher will step in and say 'come on boys you need to be listening' and sometimes that's hard because it undermines your authority but that's just the challenge of being the second teacher.

Although her strategy for dealing with the boys who are talking is different to that of the classroom teacher; it is the classroom teacher who has final say over what happens. Not all SRE teachers have this experience. For example, Nicole describes one classroom where

The kids are all talking through the lesson. I've got multiple ages in there and the teachers aren't really interested, they are working on the computer. And I think I could walk out of this room and no one would miss me

The way that classroom teachers supervise SRE teachers is an ongoing reminder to the SRE teachers that they are guests in the classroom. Like Patricia, Beth is wary of having a classroom teacher in the room when she is teaching. When she describes different classroom teachers who watch her either in a *"receptive way"* or in a *"suspicious way",* Beth illustrates different kinds of relationships between hosting classroom teachers and the guest SRE teacher. The SRE teachers commonly measure their relationship with the classroom teacher by the amount of support that is offered, and by the autonomy they are given by their classroom teacher as they teach the lesson. This level of support can be as simple as not speaking while the SRE teacher is teaching his/her lesson. Both Shirley and Jane have experienced the opposite situation and are treated like invisible "non-guests" by their classroom teachers. Shirley describes how "o*ne of my* classroom *teachers can be talking on the phone, or planning excursions"* while she teaches. Jane also describes a situation where the classroom teacher and other teachers are talking while she is teaching:

The classroom teacher will have a conversation with another teacher; honestly their desk is there and the kids are sitting on the floor. And they come in and it's as if there's no class.

The presence of the classroom teacher can also be welcomed by the SRE teacher. Bart acknowledges that classroom teachers can be *"on board and quite helpful"* or they can be *"officious at the beginning and take control and not let me teach".* Avril depends upon the classroom teachers' skill *to "deal with bad behaviour".* Nicole concurs,

I need the classroom teachers to do their job, [and I need a] teacher on duty all the time and discipline policy in place otherwise it's not fair on the other kids. And it's not my job.

In effect, Nicole relinquishes responsibility for the students' behaviour and passes it to her classroom teacher. These issues of teacher authority are discussed more fully in Chapter Six.

In sum, SRE teachers are guests in the classroom teachers' rooms where they teach. As guests in the rooms they can only make themselves at home as much as the host allows them. For some of the SRE teachers this means they are given the freedom to teach as they choose, but for others they are constrained by the classroom teachers' intervention, suspicion, or indifference. These experiences influence their pedagogy. Significantly, they choose to

teach SRE as an objective exploration of faith without inviting their students to make a faith commitment in their lessons. They also cannot take for granted that they will be able to use the classroom resources or that the classroom will be set up in the way that they would like. In addition, they are not always informed about specific incidents with their students that may help them as they teach. The SRE teachers' experiences of being guests can be tempered by the support of their classroom teachers. The SRE teachers particularly note this is the case when (i) the classroom teacher is a person of faith and (ii) when the classroom teachers helpfully intervene in difficult situations with their students. In addition to the SRE teachers' experiences of being guests of both the school and the classroom teacher, they are also hosts to their students. This experience of being a host adds another dimension to their pedagogy.

5.4   Being a host to the students

Although the SRE teachers' experience of being a guest is predominant in their conversations, they are also hosts to the students that they teach. As guests, the SRE teachers experience a power asymmetry with the classroom teachers who determine the nature of the welcome that they receive. As hosts, this asymmetry is conditionally reversed as the SRE teachers determine the nature of the welcome they give to their students. However, the students have potentially more power in this guest/host relationship than in other classrooms due to the context of SRE where the students (with their parents' permission) can choose whether or not they continue to attend SRE lessons. As a result, the SRE teachers may be more generous in the way they make their students at home to enhance the likelihood of them staying in the lessons.

The SRE welcome all students who attend their lessons because they want to share their beliefs and because they believe that God is a hospitable God. Ruitenberg (2009) argues that as teachers do not own their schools or their classrooms, rather than their welcome being a "masterful gesture", it is a "more humble gesture made by a host who knows that she herself [sic] has been received and that she is not truly in possession of [the classroom]" (p. 270). The contrast between masterful and humble gestures of hospitality provides a way to understand the nature of welcome the SRE teachers give to the students they are host to in classrooms they do not possess. SRE teachers act as humble hosts who welcome their students into the classrooms that are not their own. They are humble rather than masterful hosts because they know their students can opt out of SRE lessons. For John this means

"having something that they really connect with so they go, 'yeah, I still want to come to SRE'". Ruby identifies the tension that this desire creates because she believes that

> *if they are having a good time they will want to come and bring their friends. So there's a tension to walk. You don't want to turn it into a thirty minute slot of games and child minding; at the same time you want them to walk away saying, 'that was fun and I learned about Jesus'".*

Examples of being a humble host are found in (i) the way that many of the SRE teachers choose to be open about their own lives that is explored in depth in Chapter Six; (ii) their willingness to put up with difficulties because they do not want any student to miss out on SRE, and (iii) when Eleanor provides humble hospitality in contrast to the masterful gesture of the classroom teacher. SRE teachers give a humble welcome to their students when they put up with difficulties because they do not want any student to miss out. For example, Nerida teaches a larger class than she would choose to teach because she wants as many students as possible to participate in SRE. Consequently, to *"maintain order"* she makes her teaching more didactic and teacher-centred than she likes. Ruitenberg's humble gesture is also evident in Jane's story of dealing with a *"difficult group of girls"* who bullied her. She explains that although

> *... it wasn't particularly nice, I was more concerned that the time was being wasted with the other kids. I didn't want them to be leaving SRE, and I thought if the girls were behaving like that there was a reason, and I preferred getting alongside them.*

It is interesting to note that the voluntary nature of SRE attendance makes it possible for SRE teachers to make a "masterful gesture" of hospitality by encouraging students they find difficult to not attend SRE. In this study, only two of the SRE teachers, Ruby and Bart talked about doing this. Ruby explains how she occasionally

> *... pulls the kids aside and asks 'do you actually want to be here?' Your behaviour is showing that you don't, so why don't you go home and discuss that you don't want to be here with your parents.*

Although Bart does not follow through with it, he expresses his desire to "sheep and goat" the students, *"so that I can just work with the sheep"* and not worry about the students who don't want to learn. Thirdly, Eleanor's experience with the boy who was not in her SRE class illustrates the conflict between Ruitenberg's (2009) masterful and humble gesture of hospitality. While the classroom teacher uses a masterful gesture as host to remind the boy that he is not welcome in the SRE class, Eleanor counteracts that power through a humble

gesture of hospitality to the boy by inviting him in and giving him a book to read. This is an unconditional act of hospitality as Eleanor does this without any expectation of the boy participating in her lesson.

> *In one class I felt saddened by the treatment of the sole non-SRE student by the relief teacher. When she noticed the child was hanging around listening to the lesson as I was talking to the whole group, she curtly said "you don't do SRE, go and stand out in the hall". When I had the opportunity while the students were working later I was able to bring him in and suggest he get a reading book to look at. I hope to take a simple picture book he might enjoy next week to show I care about him too, even though, as he pointed out to me, he isn't a Christian. He is new to the school this year and as a Muslim may feel quite isolated.*

Derrida (2000b, p. 25) illustrates the depth of the unconditional nature of the law of hospitality by explaining that 'I open up my home ... I *give place* to them, and I let them come … without asking of them either reciprocity or even their names'. Hung (2013b) describes teacher-student relationship in a similar way. Similarly to the *Relational Teaching* discussed in Chapter Eight, Hung points out that every new student needs to be treated as a friend rather than an enemy that the teacher willingly welcomes. Like Derrida who compares asking someone's name to questioning a witness before a court (Derrida, 2000b), Hung believes that asking for a student's name demonstrates the teacher's power in the classroom. Whereas she believes to behave hospitably, the teacher should introduce him/herself to the student without expecting any reciprocal introductions. She concludes that

> … the newcomer receives hospitality not at the moment when the teacher asks the question: "What is your name? Who are you?" but at the time when the teacher says: "Come in! I am your teacher!" The giving and receiving hospitality occurs at the moment when the teacher welcomes the student and brings him [sic] in.

> (Hung, 2013b, p. 94)

Although the SRE teachers describe using students' names to help them with behaviour management, they also believe that knowing their students' names is a way to be welcoming; a form of hospitality. In a practical outworking of her axiology and epistemology, Pearl makes a strong link between knowing the students' names and what she is teaching them about God:

> *I'm telling the kids that God knows and loves and cares for them so much that He knows the number of hairs on their heads. What am I teaching if I can't get their names right?*

The way that the SRE teachers offer hospitality to their students is also influenced by their expressed belief that God is a hospitable and welcoming God. Eleanor and Stephen use the language of hospitality and welcome when they describe the possibility of *"having a relationship with a living God who just wants to be our friend"* (Eleanor) and God offering *"unconditional love to every person He's created"* (Stephen). A common belief in the hospitality of God motivates many of the SRE teachers to be welcoming hosts to their students. Lisa describes God's hospitality when she explains her belief that God will

> *… welcome us with open arms… it is a gift that God has given you, you just have to choose whether you want to be friends of God or you don't.*

Ruitenberg's (2009, p. 270) view of the humble gesture of hospitality is based on her belief that "true hospitality can only be offered by a host who recognises her or his indebtedness – to others from whom s/he has received hospitality". This recognition of indebtedness captures the hospitality the SRE teachers offer to their students. Because the SRE teachers believe that God has shown hospitality to them by making Himself known to them and enabling them to know Him, they humbly offer hospitality to their students. Ruby also illustrates this when she explains that she believes that because God "*has poured mercy and compassion upon me, it impacts the way that I teach the kids"*. As a result she wants to "*be gracious towards them"* and when necessary, *"discipline in love and caring"*. Stephen also expresses this view when he explains that:

> *I am there to love the students because God has loved me and that is God's command to me… I believe God's love is unconditional to every person he's created so therefore, I'm motivated to work at having unconditional love and acceptance and care to every student there.*

This unconditional love means that even the most difficult children must be treated without criticism, judgment or harshness. In effect, Stephen shows unconditional hospitality to his students because he believes that God has shown Him the same kind of hospitality. He continues by explaining that

> *… there will often be opportunity to show acceptance, patience and kindness [to a student]. It means I'm not going to be critical or judgemental or harsh. Again, my foundation for being there is knowing who God is and what his character is; and to be that way with all the students.*

Jane's description of her SRE lesson where the students were exploring the character of God through the story of the prodigal son reveals her understanding of God's hospitality.

Jane describes how she believes God's love is unconditional, that is, he is a loving and forgiving "host". However, she also explains that to be welcomed by God, a person must go to God and say sorry. As such, this is a form of conditional hospitality because there are limits and obligations of the guest. In contrast, Nicole's description of God as *"accepting you as you are, warts and all"* reflects a belief that God offers unconditional hospitality. Beth's description of her need to "*keep short accounts*" with her students because she believes Jesus would be loving, welcoming and accepting, illustrates how her belief about God's character influences her pedagogy.

In sum, like other classroom teachers, SRE teachers are hosts to their students. They cannot choose who will be in their lessons and must welcome each student without the expectation of reciprocity. Their experience of being a host to their students can be viewed through the three pedagogical lenses of epistemology, axiology and methodology. Firstly they believe in a God who is welcoming and hospitable and makes Himself know to them and their students. They therefore also want to be welcoming and hospitable, although there are times when some of the SRE teachers find this difficult because of the students' behaviour and attitude towards them. Secondly, they value being open about their own faith, and welcoming and accepting their students as friend and ally regardless of the students' behaviour or whether their students will agree with the faith-position they hold. Thirdly, due to the context of their teaching and the nature of the hospitality the SRE teachers receive and give; their teaching methodology is educational and faith-sharing rather than faith-forming.

5.5   Conclusion

Derrida's differentiation between the law of hospitality and the laws of hospitality is helpful for understanding the SRE teachers' experiences in the schools where they teach. The law of hospitality is the ideal that anyone offering hospitality should aspire to. It is limitless and unconditional where the guest is truly able to make him/herself at home without pressure to behave in a particular way. In contrast, the laws of hospitality are conditional and limited. These laws determine the rights and obligations of both the host and the guest. Because the host is the one who invites a guest in, the host always remains in control of what happens. S/he determines how much the guest can make him/herself at home and what is allowed to happen in this space. The SRE teachers in this study experience a conditional hospitality. As guests in schools, the SRE teachers know that they must behave in a particular way that is

made clear to them by the legislative context in which they teach, the principal's welcome, the classroom teachers' attitude towards them, and their beliefs about God.

Pedagogy is an art and science that is profoundly influenced by the contexts in which it is taught, in this case, the institutional-legal arrangements that shape its 'laws' as well as the human and spiritual dimensions of the teachers who mediate the guest/host relationships of SRE teaching to bring different understandings to children. Viewing pedagogy through the lenses of epistemology, axiology and methodology provides a framing that adequately captures the complexity of SRE pedagogy. The SRE teachers' experiences of hospitality are shaped by their epistemological belief that God is hospitable and welcoming, their belief in the value of making their students feel welcome, and the choice of teaching strategies they use in the classroom.

The SRE teachers are guests of the school. The welcome they receive may be open and generous or it may be more unfavourable. However, regardless of the welcome, the SRE teachers must behave as good guests who accept whatever welcome they receive. They must ask permission to use resources, accept that they do not always get the support they need, and modify their lesson to the time they are given to teach. They must work within the parameters that are set by the school (and legislation) for what they can and cannot do. As a result some of the SRE teachers are particularly careful about what they say in their lessons, while others have the freedom to teach in any way they choose. Their careful approach to difficult topics reveals their awareness that as guests they need to be cognisant of the expectations of both the school and the parents of their students. In particular, SRE teachers need to ensure that they teach about faith in a way that is appropriate for their situation. As they do not proselytise, their lessons are faith-informing rather than faith-forming. That is, they share their faith by teaching about the tenets and beliefs of their religion but they do not call their students to commit to their faith. Several of the SRE teachers recognise that faith-forming is more appropriate to the church than school because when their students attend church they become guests of the church where the host can call someone to commit to faith.

The SRE teachers are also guests of the classroom teachers where they teach. Like the welcome the SRE teachers receive from the school, the welcome of the classroom teachers varies. While the classroom teachers are rarely openly hostile, there are times when the SRE teachers are treated with levels of disdain that impact their teaching. For example, some of

the SRE teachers describe trying to teach while the classroom teacher holds a conversation with another classroom teacher nearby. More commonly, the SRE teachers are welcomed into the classrooms where they teach. However, this welcome is a conditional one where they cannot make themselves completely at home. This means that they have to work with how the classroom is set up, accept the intervention of the classroom teacher regardless of whether they feel it is required, and at times be circumspect in how they answer the students' questions.

In addition to being guests of the schools and classroom teachers, SRE teachers are also hosts to their students. Their approach to the students is influenced by their epistemological beliefs about God. They believe that God is welcoming and loving and that they should also be welcoming and loving to their students. This epistemological view also drives what they value in their classrooms (their axiology). They value being welcoming and generous to their students and do not want any student to miss out on SRE. As a result they are willing to take on extra students even though this can make teaching more difficult, and they put up with difficult behaviour of some students because they want as many students as possible to participate in SRE. As hosts to students who can choose to attend SRE lessons or opt-out of the lessons, they are aware of the tension of ensuring that their students enjoy their lessons and continue to attend. In addition to enjoying the lessons, they also want their students to learn about the Christian faith. As a result they make choices about the content and approach to teaching that will combine these two aspects into their lessons.

The SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences about hospitality influence their pedagogy. They welcome and encourage their students because they believe God openly welcomes them. They persevere in difficult situations resulting from the welcome they receive from the school or classroom teachers, or issues they encounter with their students, because they place such a high value on students attending SRE. They openly welcome all students because of their belief in a hospitable God and their belief in the importance of the subject they teach. Their experience of being both a guest and host provide the cuticle of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus because it influences all aspects of their pedagogy and provides contextual understanding of the conceptual categories of *Vulnerability and Authority, Truth and Hope*, and *Relational Teaching*.

CHAPTER SIX: VULNERABILITY AND AUTHORITY

Embedded within the SRE teachers' experiences of hospitality, both as guests of the school and the classroom teacher, and as hosts to the students; are their experiences of vulnerability and authority as they teach. The SRE teachers experience personal vulnerability because when they are open about the beliefs that are very important to them, they potentially expose themselves to rejection, ridicule or other hurt by classroom teachers and students. They also experience professional vulnerability because of their perceived lack of authority in the classroom. This is a result of teaching in an often ambivalent, sometimes hostile context, where both their pedagogic authority and their belief system are not always accepted. Both vulnerability and authority are interconnected social relationships where the SRE teachers' experience of vulnerability is paradoxically both exacerbated and tempered by their experience of authority. It is exacerbated by the lack of authority they feel that they have with the students due to the particular context of SRE teaching; and it is tempered by their belief in the spiritual authority of God, and their understanding that they teach under this authority. The spiritual authority of God also gives them the courage to teach in spite of their vulnerability.
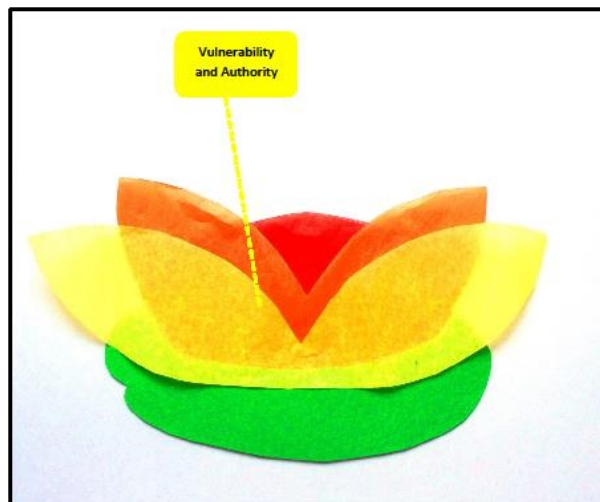
The SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability and authority are implicit in their descriptions of the three key relationships they are involved with as they teach SRE. That is, their relationships with the classroom teacher, their students, and God. Firstly, the guest relationship they have with both their classroom teacher and the school at times makes many of them feel vulnerable and lacking in authority. Secondly, their relationship with the students is marked by both experiences of vulnerability and authority as they teach a subject that is of great importance to them but is not always valued by the school or the students. Thirdly, for most of the SRE teachers, their relationship with God reflects a vulnerability and acceptance of God's authority over their decision making and behaviour. There is a complex interplay between the temporal and spiritual authority that many SRE teachers draw strength

from, and the personal and professional aspects of vulnerability many of them experience as they teach. These dual themes of authority and vulnerability are represented by the yellow layer of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus. This layer is embedded in the green cuticle layer of *Guest and Host* as a reminder that the guest and host relationships of SRE influence and constrain all other aspects of SRE pedagogy. The often complex challenges of the relationships that SRE teachers have with their classroom teachers and students are mitigated by their relationship with God and it is therefore appropriate to first write about the temporal experiences of vulnerability and authority in their relationships with their classroom teacher and students, before discussing their spiritual experiences of vulnerability and authority.

In constructivist grounded theory the process of data analysis is not linear; there is constant comparison between data and data, category with category, and concept with concept (Charmaz, 1990). A constant comparative method is the basis of theoretical analysis (Birks et al., 2008, p. 71).It is an approach to analysis where

> … every part of data, i.e. emerging codes, categories, properties, and dimensions as well as different parts of the data, are constantly compared with all other parts of the data to explore variations, similarities and differences in data.
>
> (Hallberg, 2006, p. 143)

In this study, comparing data with data required comparing different SRE teachers' descriptions of their similar experiences, and comparing different experiences by the same SRE teacher. During data analysis, eighteen focused codes relating to vulnerability and authority were constructed from the initial codes. Data related to this conceptual category has been constructed into an imagined teacher conversation that can be found in appendix 6.1. In addition, appendix 6.2 shows the movement from focused codes to conceptual category in the analysis process. Examples of the focused codes used in the construction of this conceptual category include assessing their learning, being a volunteer, being a witness, being called, controlling the class and dealing with challenges. These focused codes led to the construction of three categories: (i) being called by God, (ii) managing the students and learning environment, and (iii) walking with God that each captured the SRE teachers' experiences and beliefs regarding vulnerability and authority. For example, the focused code of managing the students and learning environment reflected the SRE teachers' experience of susceptibility and vulnerability because of their volunteer status, having a classroom teacher in the room while they teach, and being challenged by the students' difficult behaviour. Being called by God and walking with God reflected how these experiences were balanced by a

sense of strength that came from accepting the authority of a God who had called them to teach and walked with them as they taught.

At this point in the analysis, I began to read educational thinkers such as van Manen (2006a) and Palmer (1998) in conjunction with rereading the data and constructed conversation. Both van Manen and Palmer emphasise that being vulnerable is part of being human and I was struck by how this weakness and strength reflected the paradox of the SRE teachers' feelings of vulnerability and their reliance and acceptance of God's authority as they taught. Other educational research literature, for example, writers such as Bullough (2005), Dale and Frye (2009), Kelchtermans (2009), Liston (2000) and Metcalfe and Game (2006) provide a more nuanced and luminous reading of vulnerability and authority specific to the experience of being a teacher. Bullough (2005, p. 23) states that "to teach is to be vulnerable" and Dale and Frye (2009, p. 124) state that "vulnerability is an inescapable condition of teaching and of learning". This vulnerability can leave a teacher "open to pain and rejection" (Liston, 2000, p. 82) and potentially losing heart. Palmer point out that this is because:

> Teaching is done at the dangerous intersection of personal and public life… As we try to connect ourselves and our subjects with our students, we make ourselves, as well as our subjects, vulnerable to indifference, judgement, ridicule. (Palmer, 1998, p. 17)

This understanding of vulnerability is what I want to capture in the conceptual code of *Vulnerability and Authority*. I have not chosen the words *Vulnerability* or *Authority* because of their high level of usage in the SRE teachers' interviews and journals, but because they are helpful for synthesising, explaining and interpreting the data. The shift to these two words represents a movement in abstraction necessary to capture the experiences and beliefs of the SRE teachers that are important for understanding their pedagogy. It is not essential to always use the words of the participants at this level of coding. In his article, Conceptualisation: On theory and theorising using grounded theory Glaser (2002, pp. 23-24) points out that

> A concept (category) denotes a pattern that is carefully discovered by constant comparing of theoretically sampled data until conceptual saturation of interchangeable indices… The pattern is named by constantly trying to fit words to it to best capture its imageric meaning. This constant fitting leads to a best fit name of a pattern, to wit a category or a property of a category. Validity is achieved, after much fitting of words, when the chosen one best represents the pattern. It is as valid as it is grounded.

Therefore, although the word *vulnerable* is rarely used by the SRE teachers it captures one aspect, or pattern, of their experiences and beliefs. Bart is the only SRE teacher who uses the word *vulnerable* in his interviews, and he only uses it twice. Firstly, Bart uses vulnerability when he talks about nurturing a relationship with his students because "*they are in such a vulnerable place all of them and so open to learning*". The second time Bart uses vulnerable, he talks about the importance of teachers being vulnerable as they share something of themselves with their students. He explains that:

> *I think you are far more effective [as a teacher] if you are fair dinkum [when you relate to the students, and] are willing to be vulnerable in that you show an insight into yourself.*

Bart's usage of the word vulnerable is helpful. His description of his students as being in a vulnerable place describes where they are situated; a place that is somehow out of their control. However, this vulnerability is also connected with an openness to view things differently, perhaps because seeing something in a different way may reduce their experiences of vulnerability. In contrast, Bart indicates that the teachers can choose to make themselves vulnerable to connect more effectively with their students. In these two descriptions there is a sense that being vulnerable can be both out of a person's control and something that s/he can choose to take on. Both these aspects of vulnerability can be found in the SRE teachers' descriptions of SRE teaching: their vulnerability is out of their control because of the contingencies of the SRE classroom; and their vulnerability is something they choose to take on. Of interest at this point is how researchers interested in teaching and teachers conceptualise the dimensions of teacher vulnerability.

Kelchtermans (2009) is helpful because he identifies three elements that contribute to the professional vulnerability of teachers. Firstly, teachers are not fully in control of their work conditions. This is the experience of the SRE teachers who cannot control the welcome they will receive, what students they teach, the rooms where they will teach, or the classroom teachers who sit in on their lessons. Secondly, it is difficult for teachers to prove their effectiveness. This is particularly the case in SRE where there is no formal student assessment, and many of the SRE teachers believe that their impact may not be evident for many years[36]. Thirdly, teaching is not a predictable event, "there is always at the same time happening both more and less than one had planned for"(Kelchtermans, 2009, p. 267). The

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[36] This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

unpredictability of SRE teaching can particularly emerge from an unexpected question from a student, or unexpected student behaviour. However, this vulnerability is mitigated by the SRE teachers' belief that God is with them in the classroom. While this source of authority may be obvious to the SRE teachers, it is invisible to the classroom teachers and students.

It is not only God's authority that SRE teachers are referring to when they discuss authority. Twelve of the SRE teachers use the word *authority* in their interviews[37]. Harking back to their experiences of vulnerability, the SRE teachers often compare their authority with that of the classroom teacher. For example, Cathy explains that because she is a visitor, *"I don't have as much authority as a [classroom] teacher"*. Bart also compares his experience of being an SRE teacher to when he was a classroom teacher:

> *It's the most frustrating thing for someone who has been a teacher in a school; you don't have the same authority and you can't make demands and expect them to be followed instantly.*

Similar to vulnerability, authority is a "fundamental feature of classroom life" (Pace & Hemmings, 2007, p. 5). However, because authority is a social relationship, teachers do not automatically have authority in the classroom. Authority must be granted to teachers within their relationship with the students and the schools where they teach (Metz, 1978; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). There are times when SRE teachers do not feel they have been granted this authority. The two interrelated facets of authority that are identified by Schultz and Oyler (2006) and Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) are helpful for understanding the SRE teachers' experiences of authority: a teacher who is *an* authority on a subject and a teacher who is *in* authority. A teacher is *an* authority because s/he is the "possessor and transmitter of sanctioned forms of knowledge" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001, p. 874). For the SRE teachers, these sanctioned forms of knowledge include the God, bible, Teacher Books and their own religious experience. When Cathy describes herself as having a *"stronger theological background; a lot of the bible stories I know, and a lot of the theological points I know"*, she is describing herself in terms of being an authority. However, these forms of knowledge may not be sanctioned in the school context thus potentially negating the SRE teacher's authority. A teacher is *in* authority because s/he "controls the flow of traffic and talk in the classroom" (Schultz & Oyler, 2006, p. 427). However, in an SRE classroom the classroom teachers often remain in the room and stay being the one who is *in* authority. This is what Jane is

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[37] Alicia, Bart, Cathy, Daniel, Elissa, Jane, John, Michelle, Nerida, Patricia, Renee, Stephen.

experiencing when she describes classroom teachers as having *"authority over their classrooms, they have ownership of their classroom"*. When this happens, the SRE teachers' authority is often minimised.

Authority and vulnerability are also closely linked because it is often that the source of their vulnerability is their belief that they have not been granted authority. In the following discussion, the two linked experiences of vulnerability and authority will be discussed in relation to the SRE teachers' relationship with the classroom teacher, their students, and God.

6.1   Relationship with the classroom teacher

The relationships that SRE teachers have with their classroom teachers provide insight into their experience of both vulnerability and authority. As mentioned in the introduction, fifteen of the twenty three SRE teachers in this study always have a classroom teacher in the room when they teach. An additional seven teachers have classroom teachers in their room at some of the schools where they teach or at some of their lessons, and only one teacher never has a classroom teacher in the room. Mary's description of a situation that occurred in one of her lessons provides an excellent starting place for this discussion. In this story, while Mary acknowledges her vulnerability because she finds a student's behaviour difficult, she also uses her authority to deal with a situation where she cannot *"get control"* by moving the student. However, the classroom teacher then uses her authority to return the student to the group. In this action she puts Mary in a vulnerable position and illustrates to Mary and the students that she is in authority. When Mary then goes to the principal to complain about the event she goes to someone with more authority to adjudicate who has the authority in the classroom. The principal returns the authority to Mary by stating that '*That is your class and you teach your way'*.

> *I caused a bit of a stir, when I first got [to the class] they were singing out and I couldn't get control whatsoever. Bill was mucking up a treat and I got him to sit in [a different part of the] room so that he was right away from the children. One of the teachers walked straight past me in front of the class and went up to Bill, she brought him to me and said, 'do you know this boy has special needs and he shouldn't be there on his own.' I thought, 'how dare you?' I was so angry I went to the principal, [and] she calmed me down. This other young teacher stepped out of bounds. The principal said, 'That is your class and you teach your way'. I could see him [from where I was teaching] and I just wanted to get that class in some sort of order. This young teacher walked right in front of me between me and the class. And then to dress me down in front of the whole class!*

Teaching is a vulnerable enterprise because teachers open themselves to the critique of their stakeholders: students, parents, and other school staff. In any teaching situation, feelings of vulnerability are mediated by the context in which teachers teach (Kelchtermans, 2005) and by their work conditions (Bullough, 2005). These experiences of vulnerability can occur when an individual feels powerless, betrayed or defenceless in anxious or fearful situations (Lasky, 2005), or when an individual feels s/he has no direct control over a situation or feels that s/he is being "forced to act in ways that are inconsistent with his/her core beliefs and values" (Lasky, 2005, p. 901). While all teaching can be a vulnerable enterprise, there are three distinctive elements of SRE teaching that contribute to the SRE teachers' vulnerability: (i) the high significance SRE teachers place on the subject they teach; (ii) the broader historical and legislative context in which they teach; and (iii) the individual classrooms where they teach where a classroom teacher is present.

6.1.1 High significance of the subject

Both classroom and SRE teachers can experience vulnerability because they share something of importance to them. If they are passionate about what they are sharing and students do not share their passion, teaching can be a vulnerable endeavour. Liston (2000, p. 92) captures this vulnerability when he states:

> In teaching we reach out toward our students in an attempt to create connections among them and our subjects. We want them to love what we find so alluring. To love teaching is to be enamoured of the attempt to share the attraction and hold the world has on us. To love teaching is to give of yourself in a way that can be so tenderly vulnerable.

SRE teachers bring their personal faith into the public arena of the classroom. In this "tenderly vulnerable" space, their passion is on view to both their students and the classroom teacher. They are hopeful that their students will love what they love and they are aware of the classroom teacher who may not agree with what they are teaching, and who may also be judging their teaching competence. This is illustrated when Nicole explains that when she first started teaching she was "*so nervous, standing up in front of a group of kids*" but she was also aware of the classroom teacher watching her "*which is intimidating in itself*". As was pointed out in Chapter Five, these experiences can influence the way that the SRE teachers teach. For example, Jane explains that regardless of "*how nice the [classroom] teacher is, I feel very much like I am the guest and my teaching is very different when they are there*".

Nicole's experience of susceptibility comes from the indifference of both her students and the classroom teacher. She describes teaching at a difficult school where there are times when she "*feels dreadful*" because the students talk throughout her lesson and the classroom teachers are disinterested. This feeling is exacerbated by her sense of responsibility and privilege in teaching about something that is so important to her:

> *And I think, 'I could walk out of this room and no one would miss me'. There are times when I could go home and have a coffee; [I'd be] better off out of there… I feel dreadful, I've messed up again. I think I've got such a responsibility here, such a privilege to come in for half an hour.*

6.1.2   Historical and legislative context

Although the SRE teachers rarely discuss the historical context of SRE in their interviews and journals, understanding this context provides insight to why a teacher may feel vulnerable and how this could influence their pedagogy. As was pointed out in Chapter Five, SRE teachers are not teaching on "home ground". Public schools in New South Wales and Victoria are directed by government legislation to allow SRE in their schools and SRE teachers enter the schools as guests. Over the history of public schools in Australia, religious education has gone from having equal value to other subjects in the first colonial schools (Lawry, 1965) to being taught once a week by a visiting teacher. It is likely that in the first colonial schools, religious education teachers would have been recognised as being both *an* and *in* authority. Over this time, the place of SRE in schools has changed and the content of SRE does not always represent sanctioned forms of knowledge. In effect, although SRE remains a recognised part of public school education in New South Wales and Victoria, it has become increasingly marginalised and this environment creates a situation where teachers' vulnerability is increased.

Patricia's experience of teaching at a school where there is a parent who is politically involved in a campaign to remove SRE from public schools is an excellent example of how a teacher's vulnerability can be increased due to the legislative context of the SRE teaching environment. Patricia is acutely aware of the classroom teacher's presence and is nervous about how s/he will perceive her teaching because of the context in which she teaches. This awareness impacts how Patricia teaches her lesson. Although Patricia is primarily teaching the students, she is also aware of what the classroom teacher is doing because she understands that she has two audiences: the students and the classroom teacher. As a result she is careful about her answers to some of the questions her students ask. She describes

herself as having *"a lot of tension", "being really careful", and "being on edge"*. Her vulnerability is evident when one of her students asks if the bible is true. She explains that:

> *I want every student to know that I am a Christian. I had a great question [from one of the students], one of those scary questions where I think 'Oh no, the [classroom] teacher is going to think I'm a really bad SRE teacher'.*

Patricia's response exposes the vulnerability that she feels in this context. She is concerned that the classroom teacher will measure whether she is *"a really bad SRE teacher"* by the answer she gives to the question. But the situation is complex, because Patricia wants her students to know that she is a Christian and therefore it is likely that she wants to give an answer that represents her faith. Although Patricia may be *an* authority regarding the evidence for the truthfulness of the bible, she is aware that the classroom teacher may not agree with her knowledge, and that the classroom teacher is *in* authority as she teaches. As a result she is left in the vulnerable position of determining how to best answer the question. Patricia's conclusion further supports her awareness that the classroom teacher is both *and* and *in* authority. She adds that when the student asked this particular question

> *It was one of those questions where the teacher at the back of the room looks up. And I thought 'she wants to know how I am going to answer this'.*

Patricia's experience of vulnerability is amplified because she has not only the students, but also the classroom teacher as an audience. The students may or may not accept her belief about the bible, but the classroom teacher seems to represent a powerful other whose presence makes Patricia feel particularly vulnerable. Alicia also captures the vulnerability of having two audiences when she explains that she thinks carefully about how she will teach certain content because *"I want to think 'how does a non-Christian [student and classroom teacher] think of this?'"*

> *I'm also aware of what the teachers will be thinking too. They might not have the acceptance that a child might have in class, whether I'm doing the best teaching possible, but an adult will be even more critical. Although I'm not teaching to please them I'm always aware, faith needs to stand up and I want it to be real for them.*

6.1.3 The presence of the classroom teacher

Keltcherman's (2009) description of the didactic triangle of teaching provides helpful insight into who is *in* authority in the SRE classroom and to understanding the complex nature of authority when it comes to SRE teachers and their classroom context. The didactic triangle describes the relationship between a teacher, his/her students and the subject; and can

be used to understand where authority resides in a classroom. When there is a classroom teacher present in SRE there is another side to the triangle; in effect creating a "didactic square" that exists between the SRE teacher, the classroom teacher, the subject and the students. In this didactic square the relationship between the classroom teacher and the SRE teacher needs to be negotiated to ascertain where authority lies; that is, who is *in* authority.

This negotiation can take five different forms. Firstly, when some SRE teachers enter the classroom they are given the authority by the classroom teacher. This is what happens in Joshua's class when he enters the classroom and the classroom teacher says: "*'it's time for SRE' [and] I say 'good afternoon girls and boys', then I take charge of it"*. Secondly, in some classrooms the authority is given to the SRE teacher who returns it to the classroom teacher. For example, the classroom teacher in Alicia's room had completely handed over authority to Alicia and left the room during her lessons. However, she passed the authority back to him by telling him that he had to be in the room while she taught. As a result he now "*sits at the front and I've said he can intervene, he can manage them now and he does"*. Thirdly, some classroom teachers intervene in the lesson and take back the authority whenever they choose. For example, Renee describes a classroom teacher who "*steps in"* when there is a "*naughty child"* regardless of whether Renee wants her assistance. Fourthly, in some classrooms the authority moves backwards and forwards between the classroom teacher and the SRE teacher. This may be voluntary, where the SRE teacher enlists the help of the classroom teacher. For example, Michelle chooses when she will ask for the classroom teacher's help:

> *I've got a good relationship with the teacher, if someone was totally off the planet I'll give them to Mrs D. and they can work with her.*

Finally, in very rare situations, the SRE teacher acts to get the classroom teacher to submit to his/her authority. For example, Shirley, an experienced classroom teacher, was having trouble with a classroom teacher who would disrupt her class by talking on the phone or with other teachers while Shirley was teaching. Shirley *"put up with it for a long time"* and finally "negotiated" authority in the classroom by stopping teaching and sitting silently. She concluded that this

> *was the most effective [strategy], the two teachers walked out and she apologised. She now goes outside and so it seems to have helped".*

The involvement of the classroom teacher in the lesson is perceived differently by different SRE teachers where some view it in a positive, negative or neutral light. For example, Beth explains that she is aware of the classroom teachers watching her, "*some in a receptive way, and others in a suspicious way*". Cathy also explains how her feelings about having a classroom teacher in the room while she teaches, is dependent on "*what the teacher is like*". Nicole describes an incident when she was teaching a large group of students and they were losing interest in her lesson. The classroom teacher said '*why don't you change things around?*' but Nicole found the teacher's suggestion too difficult. Mary's experience of the classroom teacher described at the beginning of this section is an excellent example of a negative experience with a classroom teacher.

For some SRE teachers, the presence of a classroom teacher in the room makes them feel safer and less vulnerable. This is because they believe that classroom teachers can help to set a positive atmosphere for teaching SRE, and because they deal with difficult students. Julia explains how having the support of her classroom teacher makes a "*massive difference*" when the classroom teacher says to the students '*you have to listen and be on your best behaviour, I'm going to ask [the SRE teacher] how you were*'. Alicia describes how she is "*glad*" that there are classroom teachers in the room when she teaches because they know the students and "*are good for classroom control if they are doing their job*".

As was noted in the discussion of guest and host relationships in SRE, many of the SRE teachers work at developing positive relationships with their classroom teachers. These positive relationships help them teach without anxiety and therefore minimises their sense of vulnerability. As classroom teachers come to trust the SRE teachers, the relationship can move from a relationship of vulnerability to one of collegiality. For example, Pearl describes how the classroom teachers may step in too quickly at the beginning of the year. But as the year progresses she describes how there

> … *have been times when I have gone to [the classroom teachers]and we have worked as a team and got some good work with the kids, so yeah, probably more often than not they step back because they don't want to step on your toes. It's a show of support and I always appreciate that.*

Any instructional activity that SRE teachers undertake occurs within and is shaped by the behaviourial regimes of classrooms; that is, by what the host school and classroom teachers will or will not accept from students. Bernstein's theory of pedagogic discourse

helps to conceptualize the relationship between classroom arrangements governing behaviour and what is taught to students in the course of a lesson. According to Bernstein (2000, 2003; Bernstein & Solomon, 1999), there are two kinds of pedagogic discourse that govern the process of transmission and acquisition of knowledge: the regulative discourse and the instructional discourse. The regulative discourse regulates the form in which knowledge is transmitted and reflects expectations about social order. It "tells children what to do, where they can go" (Bernstein, 2000, p. 48). Whereas, the instructional discourse determines what is transmitted by selecting and pacing the knowledge (Bernstein, 2003). Bernstein (2000) emphasises that the regulative discourse is the dominant discourse that always embeds the instructional discourse. During an SRE lesson, the SRE teacher holds the instructional discourse, but the regulative discourse may be held by either the classroom teacher or the SRE teacher. Because the instructional discourse is embedded in the regulative discourse, the "owner" of the regulative discourse has the authority. Therefore, when a classroom teacher steps in to help an SRE teacher with a difficult classroom management situation this will diminish the SRE teacher's authority regardless of whether this was the intention.

This authority relationship between the SRE teacher and the classroom teacher is complex. For example, Alicia, a trained classroom teacher, acknowledges that her authority as an SRE teacher is different to the classroom teacher. She explains that that "*you are not necessarily recognised as an authority figure so you are going to have more difficulty with classroom control*", in effect acknowledging that she does not hold the regulative discourse. At the same time, her statement that "*I feel for the volunteers who don't have any skills or [education] training in that area to fall back on*" indicates that she recognises that her professional teaching skills help her to be the one *in* authority and therefore owning the regulative discourse. However, her authority can be tenuous because it can be compromised whenever the classroom teacher chooses to take back control of the regulative discourse.

The SRE teachers' vulnerability and authority is influenced by their relationship with the classroom teacher and impacts on the relationship they have with their students. Harjunen (2011) points out that students choose to grant authority to a teacher because they believe s/he is backed by the school and society. This granting of authority is more complex in an SRE classroom because of the way that the classroom teacher interacts with and welcomes an SRE teacher may influence how students perceive the SRE teacher. That is, in the complex guest/host relationship of SRE teaching and the distinctive place of SRE in schools, it may

not always be evident to students that their SRE teachers are backed by the school or community if they perceive that the classroom teacher has the authority in the classroom. Although the SRE teachers may hold the instructional discourse, they can be vulnerable because the classroom teacher often holds the regulative discourse. Therefore the SRE teachers' relationship with their classroom teacher is important, and they need to negotiate authority with their classroom teacher. Consequently, the pedagogical actions SRE teachers make will include spending time working on their relationship with classroom teachers.

In sum, the SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability and authority in the relationship they have with the classroom teacher influence their pedagogy. Regardless of whether the SRE teachers describe their experience of the classroom teacher who is present when they teach as positive, negative or neutral, they are all aware that another teacher is watching what they do and this influences how they teach. Even when SRE teachers are capable of managing a classroom and/or are given autonomy in the instructional discourse, they always have to allow classroom teachers to take back authority when they choose to do so. This unusual pedagogical relationship between the SRE teacher and the classroom teacher influences SRE pedagogy, as does the relationship that an SRE teacher has with his/her students that I now discuss.

6.2   Relationship with students

It has already been noted that authority is a social relationship where a teacher only has authority when s/he is granted legitimacy (Metz, 1978; Pace & Hemmings, 2007). It is interesting to observe that the SRE teachers who have been classroom teachers prior to being SRE teachers[38] have a different experience of authority when they teacher SRE from when they taught in the classroom. As classroom teachers, authority was (at least partially) granted to them because of their social position in the school. In contrast, as SRE teachers they are not always granted legitimacy by the students because of the presence of a classroom teacher. Nerida compares her experience of being a classroom teacher where she has *"fine control"* and *"all the authority in your school"* to when she is an SRE teacher which she describes as *"humbling", "the hardest teaching I think I'll ever do"* and *"a totally different skill"*. She concludes that SRE teachers need:

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[38] These teachers are Alicia, Bart, Beth, Michelle, Nerida and Shirley.

a good understanding of running a really tight ship so that [the students] are quiet enough to hear what you are saying. If they are all mucking around and being stupid it makes the lesson pretty ineffectual because they just think it's one big joke, and even the good kids find it pretty frustrating because they can't be heard.

Bart also describes his frustration about the different authority he experiences as an SRE teacher compared to a classroom teacher:

… you don't have the same authority as the teacher in the school and you can't make demands and expect them to be followed instantly.

Key to Bart's description is the word *same.* He acknowledges that he does have authority in the classroom, but it is different to that of the classroom teacher because "*in the kids' eyes I have a different place in the school".* Bart also believes that it is important to *"teach with love"* because he doesn't have the authority of the school backing him up and therefore, *"the consequences you can bring are not nearly as great as the school can bring".*

The SRE teachers' relationships with their students illustrate their experiences of both vulnerability and authority in the classroom. SRE teachers are vulnerable because, as Palmer puts it "No matter how technical my subject may be, the things I teach are things I care about – and what I care about helps define my selfhood" (1998, p. 17). It is a teacher's choice of teaching subject, the value s/he has for the subject, and his/her sense of self resulting from teaching that subject that makes him/her so vulnerable in a classroom (Zembylas, 2003). The stakes are high for the SRE teachers who believe that what they are teaching has "*eternal consequences"* (Ruby), and so their potential for vulnerability is also high. For example, Cathy explains that teaching what is taught in SRE is

the most important thing in the world that they understand this, it's not like if you don't know your twelve times table, [which] most of us have forgotten by our twenties. You want it to be something they'll take on board for ever and it will change their lives forever.

The SRE teachers' experience of authority in the classroom is also reflected in the ways they relate to their students. For many of the SRE teachers, authority and control (the regulative discourse) are almost synonymous: to be in authority means to be in control of the students. Stephen differentiates between the regulative discourse that he calls *"discipline control"* and the instructional discourse that he calls *"a teaching communication thing".* For Stephen, good behaviour management is important "*so that the students know that you're the*

teacher and you have the authority to discipline them". He reveals his vulnerability when he explains that when he struggles because of

> *... discipline issues or the class isn't listening, I start to doubt whether I can teach well [and this] questions my validity of being there [and] how effective I can be.*

Without this control the SRE teachers can struggle to find a voice for the instructional discourse. Cathy sees this as a "*balance between being able to control the class and allowing the kids to have a say".* Elissa struggled to find a voice because she *"couldn't manage"* or "*keep under control*" her year six class without the intervention of the classroom teacher.

The didactic triangle helps to explicate SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability and authority in their relationships with their students. Harjunen (2009) identifies three types of spaces in the didactic triangle that construct and maintain authority in the classroom (Harjunen, 2009). Two of these spaces, the didactic interaction that focuses on the subject being taught (the teacher being *an* authority, and the instructional discourse); and the deontic interaction that focuses on "establishing rules, controlling the situation, giving orders and maintaining discipline" (Harjunen, 2009, p. 110) (the teacher being *in* authority, and the regulative discourse) have already been discussed in the previous section. The third of these spaces, the pedagogical interaction that is characterised by trust, care, justice, and love is relevant to the SRE teachers' relationship with their students. Any relationship that is guided by love is potentially a "vulnerable undertaking, one that leaves the teacher open to pain and rejection" (Liston, 2000, p. 82). Because of this love they are willing to continue teaching even if they are bullied or disrespected. They are willing to make themselves vulnerable by being open about their lives and sharing their vulnerabilities with their students. They also recognise there are times that they need to gain authority in their classrooms. They describe being confident, dressing appropriately, using a "teacher name", entering the classroom in a particular way, and using rules as strategies for gaining authority.

6.2.1   Experiencing vulnerability

The SRE teachers experience vulnerability because of the way that their students, and sometimes the teachers, see them. Stephen, an SRE teacher with no professional classroom teacher training, describes how one of his students told him he was not a real teacher. Whereas Michelle, an experienced and trained classroom teacher, believes that the students make judgments about both their classroom and SRE teachers and do not think "*that 'Oh she's a SRE teacher she's going to be pretty pathetic'".* However, this belief may be unique

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to Michelle who is teaching in a school where she was a school principal. As was discussed in the previous section, other SRE teachers who are also trained classroom teachers describe how their authority in the classroom is different to when they were classroom teachers.

When Jane describes an ongoing relationship with a student in her class who is bullying her, she reveals how vulnerable she felt:

> *[There were] weeks where honestly - maybe it's an age thing because I'm not that fragile – but there were times when I had to hold it together in the classroom. [The girl] would get the group [of her friends] and say, 'oh look at that skirt' or 'look at that nose'. It was really personal stuff. It was like being a child. … And I felt apprehensive every time I went in.*

Several months later in her second interview, Jane reflected on how this experience affected her teaching:

> *That young girl would know when I wasn't prepared. And I was flustered. I actually went into the child role [because of the way she treated me] and had to come out of that.*

In addition to being vulnerable, Jane's description of *"being like a child"* suggests a position lacking in authority. While Jane may have been *an* authority, it was challenging for her to be *in* authority because it was not granted by the girl and her friends.

6.2.2 Making themselves vulnerable

There is also something in being vulnerable that enables the SRE teachers to relate differently to their students. For example, Shirley shares vulnerability with a student by *"secretly helping"* a boy in her class by *"writing out the answers before the lesson and slipping them under his book… [and] trying not to draw attention to him and his difficulties"*. Pearl shares vulnerability with the students when she is leading them in prayer and the school principal enters the classroom:

> *I invited them to pray after me. No one wanted to. It might have been because the principal walked into the classroom … and they might have felt self-conscious like I did.*

There are also SRE teachers who choose to be vulnerable by being open about their lives with their students. For Pearl, being real means going beyond *"just spouting information"*. She believes that for her students to know that what she is teaching is true she must do more than:

> *... teach facts and figures. I want to share life and things I've learn along the way. So there are times when I'll put personal stories into my lesson, not often but on occasions.*

Similarly, Bart believes his effectiveness as a teacher is increased when he is *"willing to be vulnerable [by] showing an insight into himself"*. While Pearl's decision to include personal stories and Bart's decision to show an insight about himself makes them potentially vulnerable, they do this willingly because they believe that their vulnerability helps their students to engage with and possibly accept the veracity of what they are teaching.

For the SRE teachers, being real means opening up to their students. SRE teachers make the deliberate choice to be real to help their students engage with what they are teaching. This choice opens them to the risk of being hurt or wounded by their students' lack of interest in their teaching. This is one of the reasons why although Bart is a capable, experienced teacher, he can still find teaching SRE *"heartbreaking"* when he is *"sharing his faith and feeling like he's hitting a brick wall"*.

Michelle explains that she believes SRE teachers should *"be human"* and not take the attitude that they know everything and are never wrong or do the wrong thing. It is in her *humanness* that she makes herself vulnerable. As a confident, experienced teacher, Michelle's vulnerability does not come from challenges in the classroom; rather it comes with her decision to show her humanness through her own stories.

> *If I'm talking about sin I always say, 'you're never going to believe this, I cheated on the golf course, but I fixed it up'... I don't make an issue about it, but just showing that there is a degree of humanness about you, you're not this entity that's sanctimoniously attached to the church and divorced from the school.*

Michelle also makes herself vulnerable by acknowledging that she is not always an authority:

> *When the kids ask me some complicated question I say 'I don't know I'll have to go and ask my minister, and let you know next week'.*

Shirley also chooses to admit to her students when she does not know the answer to a student's question. She explains that *"I'm honest about that, if it's something I can find out about I do. We can't be seen to be God ourselves"*. In one sense she may be making herself vulnerable to ridicule, but it is also an opportunity for her to explain her belief that it is God, and not her, who is the authority in the classroom.

6.2.3 Gaining authority

The SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability are interwoven with their experiences of authority. Regardless of how authority is used, any use of authority acknowledges an asymmetrical and unequal relationship between two or more people and is a "profoundly moral matter" (Buzzelli & Johnston, 2001, p. 874). This is because, "to be in authority is to be in a position of influence" (van Manen, 2006, p. 70). This pedagogical influence is encapsulated in pedagogic authority where a teacher's authority is authoritative rather than authoritarian (Harjunen, 2009). This may be what Joshua is getting at when he describes himself as "*standing up to*" (being authoritative) and not "*standing over*" (being authoritarian to) his students. Love, vulnerability and authority work together in pedagogic authority. Game and Metcalfe (2008) distinguish between authority without love where authority is externally imposed upon someone, and authority with love "a relation through which people give and receive the support they need to live creatively" (Game & Metcalfe, 2008, p. 461). Authority with love sees students not as objects to be filled but relationships to be nurtured; this relational aspect of SRE pedagogy will be discussed in Chapter Eight. The SRE teachers describe four actions they take to enhance the students' recognition of their authority: (i) being confident; (ii) dressing appropriately; (iii) having a "teacher" name; and (iv) using rules and incentives. As the SRE teachers use these strategies they put aside their vulnerability and embrace their authority.

Renee explains that importance of being confident in SRE:

> *I think you need to be confident, we've had teachers who are new and the kids go right over them. We have one teacher who has been teaching all year, she doesn't feel confident in the class and she still has trouble with them.*

Michelle emphasises the importance of "*presence*" that starts with dressing in such a way that the students understand that she is a teacher. It is as if she physically becomes a teacher:

> *I think we should have a presence, today I was in a tracksuit so I went and got changed. I try to be presentable. We have to come in in an orderly way to show that we're ok and we're prepared for what happens.*

Renee and Shirley also mention the clothes they wear to teach SRE and the messages this sends to the students, parents and classroom teachers. Renee explains that SRE teachers "*can't turn up in thongs and shorts for SRE. We have to make an effort*". Similarly, Shirley takes care with what she wears because she believes that children judge a teacher by his/her

appearance. She explains that her "*outward appearance is important, to smile and sound bright and breezy no matter how you're feeling*".

Both Stephen and Elissa connect their authority with the name students use to address them. Stephen explains that he calls himself Mr Stephen: "*Mr for the authority and Stephen for the personal*". In this naming, Stephen also differentiates his authority from that of the teacher who would use his/her surname. Elissa also emphasises the importance of what she is called by the students because "*they do need some kind of boundary that says you are Mr so and so, or Mrs so and so*".

The use of rules to control behaviour is regularly mentioned by the SRE teachers in this study. Some of the SRE teachers emphasise adopting the existing classroom and school rules while others create their own rules for their classrooms. By using the school's rules the SRE teachers align themselves with the authority of the school and show their students that they are part of the authorising institution. Avril believes that this reminds the students that she is a teacher; "*they have to understand that I am a classroom teacher and they have to follow the classroom rules*". Renee also believes that using existing classroom rules helps the students to understand that SRE teachers are "*real teachers*". Renee, and Bart both describe how they believe that rules stop the students from taking control. Bart talks about having "*rock solid*" rules and not being "*wishy washy*" in how he deals with student behaviour so that the students know when they have "*crossed the line*" and "*have it all over you*". In a similar fashion, Renee talks about "*laying down the rules*" because "*a lot of kids think they can walk all over SRE teachers*". Several of the SRE teachers also discuss using incentives and rewards to control their students' behaviour. Both Nerida and Michelle would prefer that their students were intrinsically motivated to learn. However, due to their large class sizes and limited time with the students each week they both choose to use rewards when they teach SRE. John provides "*self-centred incentives*" such as being the first to play a game and Ruby has a lucky dip for children with good behaviour.

In sum, SRE teachers share the same vulnerability as classroom teachers because they care about what they are teaching. In addition, for many of the SRE teachers, their belief in the importance of their students learning about God and their relationship with the classroom teacher accentuates their vulnerability. This vulnerability is increased because they believe that it is not just what they teach, but who they are that will impact their students. Several of

the SRE teachers express the belief that the students judge Christianity by what they are like. Therefore, the way they treat their students (and the classroom teacher) and the stories they tell about their own faith contribute to the students' understanding of Christianity. Many of the SRE teachers emphasise *"being real";* of telling personal stories about their own faith and not just sharing facts about Christianity.

SRE teachers are vulnerable because they are sharing something deeply important to them. They are also vulnerable because of the complex authority relationship that can develop between them and their classroom teachers. Before SRE teachers enter the classroom, they make a decision to "put on" their "SRE teacher character" to help their students see them as teachers and embrace their authority. For example, SRE teachers describe dressing in clothes that they believe are appropriate for the classroom, expressing confidence as they enter the classroom, maintaining their confident demeanour even when they are facing difficulties, utilising the school's reward system and rules, and calling themselves by formal names to help their students know that they are teachers. These methodological strategies are part of their SRE pedagogy. Through all this, the SRE teachers persevere despite their experiences because ultimately they believe that their authority comes not from their institutional location, but from the authority of God. To understand this it is necessary to focus on the SRE teachers' relationship with God.

6.3   Relationship with God

The SRE teachers describe God not as a distant spiritual being, but as someone that they have a close relationship with. Their relationship with God means that the difficulties associated with the vulnerability they feel are diminished because of the delegated authority they receive from God. This relationship (i) removes their sense of ultimate vulnerability, (ii) compels them to teach SRE because they believe He calls them to teach, and (iii) helps them teach because they believe that God is actively involved in their lessons.

6.3.1   Removing their sense of ultimate vulnerability

This closeness to God removes their sense of ultimate vulnerability because, as Nicole puts it, God is *"there for you".* In the following excerpt from Nicole's second interview, her description reveals how her relationship with God moves her from feelings of hopelessness to trusting that God is always with her, caring for her and accepting her:

He is there for you… He is in your corner. I used to wake up in the middle of the night and everything was so black and so hopeless. And I just had the picture of this thin cord going up to heaven and I was connected but I didn't know what it was all about. Now I wake up in the morning and I am praising God, worshiping God. And I think that's knowing God; knowing He's there. He's there in the morning; He's there at the closing of the day. He is always there. He accepts you as you are, warts and all. He fills in the gaps and He does good things in your life. Just to know that He cares about every single little thing.

Because the SRE teachers believe that God has the power and authority to guide and care for them, this relationship diminishes their feelings of vulnerability about life in general that influences how they deal with their experiences in the classroom. In knowing God, Nicole describes her experience of life as moving from a vulnerable position of *"black and hopeless"* to a safe position where she is *"praising and worshiping God".* Jane describes a similar transformation where she moves from the vulnerability of *"the tired part of Jane, the fallen part of Jane, the personal part of Jane from divorce"* to *"my confidence in God, absolutely knowing that I am loved and forgiven".*

6.3.2   Calling them to teach

Although the SRE teachers may experience vulnerability because of their contingent status in the classroom, it is mitigated by their expressed belief that God is the one in authority who is looking after them as they teach. While they may not always feel that authority has been granted to them by the schools and classroom teachers, many of them are confident that God has granted them authority by calling them to SRE. This calling helps to diminish their vulnerability and keeps them returning to the classroom week after week by granting them with the authority they may not receive from schools or classroom teachers.

Calling is derived from the Latin word *vocare* which refers to "a call, summons or invitation to a particular way of life" (Billett, 2011, p. 60). Calling or vocation can be described with reference to a divine call or a sense of passion or giftedness and provides a "sense of purpose or direction that leads an individual toward some kind of personally fulfilling and/or significant engagement within the work role" (Dik & Duffy, 2009, p. 427). For many of the SRE teachers in this study, the call they feel is a divine one. Inherent to such a calling is the belief that the "caller" (God) has the authority to ask the SRE teachers to do something for Him. When Michelle describes SRE teaching as something that God *"allows her to do",* that is her *"mark of service"*, and way of showing love and respect to God, she acknowledges His position of authority in her relationship with Him. Like Patricia, her

authority to teach comes from a sense of calling. It is important to note that although Michelle believes that she is called to teach SRE and takes God's authority with her into the classroom, this does not completely remove her feelings of vulnerability. This is evident in her description of teaching SRE as *"spooky, scary and humbling"*.

Pearl, who has been teaching SRE for five years, explains that she is

> *… very motivated because I have a sense of God's call over the years…[and] although I do have my share of autistic and very challenging kids, I think I fall back on that. Even if I have a bad day, I think "no this is what God has got for me".*

The way that Pearl's calling keeps her returning to the classroom is reminiscent of Game and Metcalfe's (2009, p. 272) description of how having the sense of a calling in a mental health context involves a passion that:

> … has an element of passivity and suffering. In contrast to desire's future orientation, passion accepts and suffers the world, not emanating from a subject, passion is an energy that is both active and passive. Not something done or chosen by a subject, passion is something received, something that moves you mysteriously. It is an experience of grace.

For Pearl this passion comes from *"God [who] has got"* something for her to do. Regardless of the challenges she will do it because it has been given to her. Similarly, Patricia's authority to teach appears to come from her sense of being called rather than from an institutional backing.

The SRE teachers describe their calling in two different ways. The eight SRE teachers who are in paid church ministry positions and are required to teach SRE as part of their employment do not refer to being specifically called to teach SRE. Rather, they describe SRE teaching as part of their broader calling. In contrast, six of the fifteen SRE teachers who volunteer to teach SRE specifically describe themselves as being called to teach, and the other SRE teachers describe God's role in their decision to teach without using the term "calling". The six SRE teachers who specifically describe themselves as being called describe their experience in different ways. Eleanor explains that SRE teaching is *"the place I've been called to and I've got to tough it through the difficult times"*. Joshua describes his call as an *"answer to my prayer"*:

> *I was waiting for a message [about what job to do for God], suddenly God said 'go and apply for SRE' and [the people organising SRE] said 'we really need someone'. It was just an answer to my prayer.*

Similarly, Pearl also *"had a sense of God's call over the years"*. Julia had never considered teaching SRE. She used to sit in her husband's lesson while he was teaching *"mainly because of logistics because he had the car and when he finished I could have the car to go to work"*. As she watched him teach she saw the value in teaching SRE and thought she could do it. She explains that:

> *I think I was called, it never occurred to me ever to do children's ministry in any way. That's because I didn't have enough experience of kids, I was quite surprised.*

While not always using the word "call" to describe God's involvement in their teaching, the other nine SRE teachers refer to God's role in their teaching. For example, while Beth does not specifically describe being called to teach, she explains that she continues to teach SRE because *"God has given us [her and her husband] such a heart for children to know about Him, when we've felt like we're full and we can't do any more [we keep going]"*. Similarly, Nicole describes how God motivates and encourages her so that she continues teaching SRE. She explains that whenever *"I think of giving up God always puts that little carrot [of something special happening in the classroom] in front of me"*. Mary does not specifically describe herself as being called to teach SRE however, she believes it is God in the form of the Holy Spirit who keeps her teaching from week to week. She started teaching in 1949 when a priest at her church asked for volunteers.

> *He asked Sunday after Sunday, I thought I couldn't stand up in front of a class and teach. I thought one day that things were getting pretty desperate that I would do it for a week until they get someone else. It was just for the time being, but that was over fifty years ago.*

The SRE teachers who teach SRE as part of their employment do not talk of a specific call to teach SRE. If they discuss their calling, they describe it in terms of a calling to the wider Christian ministry that they work in, and that SRE is a part of. For example, Bart explains that he does not *"feel specifically called to SRE, but to a much wider ministry to children and young people"*. John also explains that

> *I feel a specific and unmistakeable pull to be living and serving in this part of the inner city. While I do not feel specifically called to SRE teaching, I do it enthusiastically because I see it as one of the many aspects of serving in this area.*

Palmer (1998, p. 30) points out that it is a teacher's belief that s/he is called to teach that helps him/her "over the long haul, despite the difficult days". This is evident in Pearl's statement that although she can have *"a bad day"* she will *"stick to the course God has set*

me on". In addition, for many of the SRE teachers, their calling is so powerful that unless something changes, they will continue to teach. For example, Nicole explains that she will not stop teaching SRE unless she is sure that God is calling her out of SRE teaching; and although Joshua had a break from teaching SRE because he was too busy at work, he ultimately returned to the calling. At ninety-one, Joshua is still teaching SRE.

The authority that comes from God's call does not always extinguish the SRE teacher's vulnerability. Both Michelle and Ruby describe how this call from God also puts pressure on them. Michelle, a retired school principal, explains that

> *I always wanted to get my teaching right [when I was a classroom teacher], but it is such a big responsibility knowing that I am presenting my belief and my faith in such a way that people are listening to it.*

In a similar way, Ruby believes that if she was just *"doing a task"* rather than a Christian ministry that she feels called to "*I could probably walk away a lot less emotionally drained"*. Ruby goes on to say:

> *I'm pretty wiped out after teaching three classes on a Thursday afternoon. I walk away and I just need to sit down and have some head space to myself. I suppose I'm really seeing the fruits of emotionally investing in them and the relationships with the parents, the [school] receptionists, the [classroom] teachers and the kids.*

SRE pedagogy is distinctive because of the SRE teachers' relationship with God and their desire for the students to have a similar relationship that gives them the confidence and authority to overcome the vulnerability of the SRE classroom and teach SRE. While a calling to teach supports and encourages the SRE teachers it does not necessarily protect them from the vulnerability of the classroom. It is their expressed belief in the possibility of their students having a relationship with God that is similar to their own; a relationship where they believe they are no longer vulnerable but safely with God, that motivates all the SRE teachers to continue teaching regardless of any negative or vulnerable experiences in the classroom. This is exemplified in Ruby's description of being *"pretty wiped out after teaching"* because of the emotional investment she makes; in Michelle's sense of the *"big responsibility"* of teaching SRE; and in Patricia's description of the time leading up to her SRE lesson:

> *I find preparing for SRE and the twenty four hours leading up to SRE really draining. I teach SRE at 2.40 on a Thursday afternoon and I don't have anything before that on a Thursday morning. And my Thursday morning is often, 'oh have I got my stuff for SRE' and 'I can't believe I do this'. Going to the school I am quite apprehensive.*

[Then] I go into the lesson and do it, and I come out going 'I love doing that. I can't wait for next week'.

6.3.3 Helping them to teach

The SRE teachers continue teaching because they believe that God has called them to teach and that He is with them in the classroom helping them to teach. Pearl draws from a bible passage in 1 Corinthians[39] to explain that she "*throws the seed but God does the work*". Buzzelli and Johnston (2001) description of the coexistence between a teacher being *in* authority and being *an* authority helps to explicate how "*God does the work*" in an SRE classroom. In SRE pedagogy, *in* and *an* authority can also be seen in the cooperative relationship between God and the SRE teachers often described by the SRE teachers as "*walking with God*". Both God and these SRE teachers are *in* authority; and they are both *an* authority. On one hand, these SRE teachers are *in* authority (as limited as this may be) as they organise and manage student learning, however they are always subject to God's authority to change their lesson and take it in a different direction. In addition, although these SRE teachers are also *an* authority as possess the knowledge sanctioned by their SRE provider, they believe that God is the ultimate source of this authority. Therefore the SRE teachers go into the classroom with the delegated authority of God, and it is this delegated authority that can diminish their sense of vulnerability or frustration for not being granted authority by the school or classroom teacher.

The SRE teachers believe that God helps them to teach by helping them as they prepare their lessons and making the lesson go well. Firstly, several of the SRE teachers describe how God helps them prepare their lessons. This is most pronounced in Nicole's description of planning a lesson about carrying around hurts and rejections. Interestingly, in this story Nicole also reveals her sense of vulnerability when she says "i*t was a lesson that the principal sat [in on] and I was so scared*".

> *I thought 'how am I going to get this across?' At the last minute God said 'get some rocks and time them up with a string'. I got one of the kids to volunteer and I said 'how many of you feel like you don't get a share at home? This is unfairness, another one was rejection'. Then I tied two together and draped [them] around their necks. Then I said, 'now try to walk with them on', and the kids got it straight away… it was a lesson that God inspired right at the last minute.*

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[39] This bible passage is included in the constructed conversation.

Nicole is the only teacher who describes God helping her by speaking in an audible voice. The SRE teachers usually describe this in terms of God giving them ideas. For example, Pearl explains that *"right from when I am preparing I have a real sense that God gives me creative ideas and even creative questions"*.

Prayer is closely linked to the teachers' belief that God helps them as they prepare their lessons. All the SRE teachers who completed journals included prayer as part of their lesson preparation. For example, Eleanor writes how the preparation for one lesson took *"About 4 hours spread over Sunday and Monday. Some of it just thinking and praying time"*. Similarly, when Patricia prepared a lesson for approximately an hour, she notes that she *"read through the bible passage. Prayed for students and class. Preparation of activities/lesson"*. It is through prayer that the SRE teachers receive the delegated authority from God, praying is therefore not an adjunct to their pedagogy; it is an essential aspect of their pedagogy.

Secondly, the SRE teachers believe that God is with them making their lessons go well. Although they are vulnerable, they walk into the classroom believing that a greater power than themselves is with them. For example, Jane believes that God is the one who is in control of what happens in the classroom and she prays at the beginning of the lesson as a *"courtesy of acknowledging that God is the one in control"*. This is also illustrated in Eleanor's explanation of what she does when she feels underprepared for her lesson: *"I'll be driving to [SRE] praying 'God you've just go to make this work today, in my weakness, show yourself strong'"*.

Many of the teachers describe how they pray during their lessons. These prayers acknowledge the delegated authority that God gives to them. For example, Beth prays on her way to the lesson and as she teaches:

> *Sometimes I'll pray under my breath while I'm teaching. As I'm coming into the school I pray for the Lordship of God over the school. Sometimes I just walk quietly around and affirm that God is there and He will show me a way to present Him to the children and the classroom teacher if they are choosing to listen.*

Beth also describes how when she prays God's authority becomes evident in the classroom. In this following story she describes her belief that prayer resulted in a *"tangible peace in the room"*:

One day in a grade 2, the regular teacher wasn't there. As we were lining up to go in from lunch time one [boy] went off his face, he went absolutely ballistic. He was picking up chairs and throwing them, he would hit out at any one who came near him. The teacher didn't know what to do about it. I came in and sat down at my chair. I thought 'what the heck is going on here?' I looked down and there were about ten children sitting right near me, obviously distancing themselves from this. I asked them 'what do you think we should do?' and they said 'let's pray'. And they prayed with me, they initiated it. And he did settle down, he didn't join in. Sometimes there's just this lovely tangible peace in the room and I think how special. I hope that children are touched [when that happens] to know that God is real.

In sum, the SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences about vulnerability and authority influence their pedagogy. The SRE teachers believe that they are not alone in the classroom; God is with them. Although their experience in the classroom is often of vulnerability and lack of authority, their trust in God's delegated authority enables them to continue teaching. Their calling to teach comes from the authority of God and they believe that God provides them with the knowledge they need in all aspects of their teaching. They believe that God helps them in their preparation, guides them in their understanding of what they are teaching, and changes the lesson when necessary. They receive this knowledge through praying to Him and through reading the bible that they believe is His word. Because the SRE teachers' believe that God is with them in the classroom prayer is integral to their pedagogy. Although the SRE teachers believe they are called to teach SRE and that God is with them in the classroom this does not extinguish their experiences of vulnerability. Rather, God's authority enables them to cope with the vulnerability and lack of authority they experience in the classroom.

6.4   Conclusion

This chapter has explored the SRE teachers' experiences and beliefs about vulnerability and authority as they teach SRE. Vulnerability and authority are interrelated in the SRE classroom. Like classroom teachers, the SRE teachers can experience vulnerability because of the high value they place on the subject they teach. They also experience vulnerability because of their guest status in the classroom and the contingent nature of the hospitality they receive. The SRE teachers also willingly choose to make themselves vulnerable by being open and honest about their lives because they believe this will help their students to learn about their faith. Often the SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability are due to their perceived lack of authority in the classroom. To reduce these experiences, they use teaching strategies that help them to gain authority in the classroom. In addition, the SRE

teachers believe that they are not alone when they cross the threshold of their classrooms. They believe that God goes with them and delegates his authority to them.

Although all teachers potentially experience vulnerability, the SRE teachers' vulnerability is distinctive. The SRE teachers are vulnerable and potentially struggle for authority because they teach in a classroom that is not their own, often with the classroom teacher in attendance; and they teach a subject which is not always acknowledged as important by the school where they teach, the classroom teacher, or the students. All the SRE teachers describe experiences that indicate they lack authority in the classrooms where they teach. Perhaps surprisingly, the majority of SRE teachers who are also trained classroom teachers note that they do not have the same authority as SRE teachers as they had when they were classroom teachers. That is, they lack the institutional backing that the classroom teachers have. They may be *an* authority in the classroom because of their knowledge of the subject they teach, but they are often not *in* authority because of the contingencies of SRE teaching.

Both the vulnerability of teaching and the lack of authority that many of the SRE teachers describe are mitigated by their expressed belief that God has the power and authority to walk with them as they teach SRE. Their understanding of God's authority comes from their own experience and belief about who God is and what He does for them. In particular, the majority of SRE teachers believe that God has called them either to teach SRE or to Christian ministry which includes teaching SRE. This belief that they are called motivates and encourages them to continue teaching SRE even when they have negative experiences of the school, classroom teachers or students. In effect it is the authoritative call from God that gives them the authority to teach rather than the institutional backing of the school.

Although the SRE teachers believe that God is with them as they prepare their lessons and teach them this does not mean there is no work for them to do. They still believe that they must spend the time preparing their lessons so that God can work with them in the classroom. Part of their preparation involves spending time in communication with God through prayer. Their descriptions of prayer indicate that prayer is not simply a Christian discipline or habit, rather it is an important part of the preparation because they believe it is when God guides them in their teaching.

The SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability are increased when they teach SRE with a classroom teacher in the room. Although the SRE teachers usually hold the instructional discourse in the classroom, the classroom teachers often retain the regulative discourse. As the classroom teachers are holders of the regulative discourse they often retain control of what happens in the classroom. In this way the classroom teachers remain the holders of authority in the classroom. Any movement of authority from the classroom teacher to the SRE teacher must be explicitly or implicitly negotiated by the SRE teacher. This negotiation is easier when there is a positive relationship between the classroom teacher and the SRE teacher. Therefore, the time an SRE teacher takes in developing a relationship with his/her classroom teacher is an important aspect of his/her pedagogy. However, even when the negotiation results in the SRE teacher gaining the regulative discourse, his/her authority is fragile and subject to the whims of the classroom teacher who can take back the regulative discourse whenever s/he chooses. This is an additional layer of vulnerability that a classroom teacher normally does not have to deal with and explains why SRE teachers who have been classroom teachers have a different experience of authority in the SRE classroom to their other experiences of classroom teaching. In addition, because the SRE teachers believe that God is intimately involved in what happens in their lessons, God is potentially an unseen owner of regulative discourse in an SRE classroom. In effect, the SRE teachers believe that God regulates the discourse and they must submit to their perception of His authority and do what they think He wants them to do. However, unlike the relationship with the classroom teacher that can be a source of vulnerability, this appears to reduce their experiences of vulnerability.

The SRE teachers' pedagogy is influenced by their belief that it is both the content of their lessons and who they are that will impact their students. Consequently, they choose to share personal stories about their lives with their students to help them know that their faith is "real". Making themselves real in this way is a deliberate decision of the SRE teachers. By opening their lives up in this way, they make themselves vulnerable to their students (and the classroom teacher's) opinions. This vulnerability is different to the vulnerability that they experience because of the environment in which they teach. Making themselves "real" requires the SRE teachers purposefully taking on vulnerability to help students engage and learn. In this way, vulnerability becomes a part of the methodological pedagogy.

Finally, in an environment where the SRE teachers are not always recognised as being in authority, the SRE teachers choose strategies that they believe make them more teacher-like for the students. They choose to wear certain clothes, to be known by formal names, and use school rewards and school rules. However, they also choose to act differently to how they believe classroom teachers act to set themselves apart from the classroom counterparts. They make the time to share more of their own lives with their students, and to respond to the questions of their students[40].

The SRE teachers' pedagogy is influenced by their epistemology, axiology and methodology. They believe that God directs and guides them and that He delegates His authority to them. Although there are challenges to their authority in the SRE classroom, they trust in God to care for them and help them through these difficulties. Perhaps most significantly, the SRE teachers' ultimate source of authority comes from their relationship with God. Their sense of who they are within their relationship with God enables them to keep coming back into the classroom even though who they are in the eyes of the classroom teacher and students can increase their vulnerability. Their vulnerability can also increase, and their authority decrease, because their axiology that arises from their belief in God may be different to the predominant values of the schools where they teach. Their methodology is also influenced by their relationship with God who they believe guides them to teach in a particular way. Each of these aspects of their pedagogy is influenced by their experiences of vulnerability and authority and is therefore significant for understanding SRE pedagogy. In the following chapter, the SRE teachers' experiences and belief about truth and hope are discussed to further develop an understanding of their pedagogy.

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[40] This is further discussed in Chapter Seven.

CHAPTER SEVEN: TRUTH AND HOPE

The previous chapters have shown how SRE pedagogy is shaped by the distinctive context of SRE and how the SRE teachers respond to this. Each layer of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus takes us closer to the relational heart of SRE pedagogy. The outer layer of the lotus represents the SRE teachers' experience of hospitality that exists because of the legislative and institutional context in which they teach. This context constrains and shapes all aspects of their SRE pedagogy. The next layer represents the SRE teachers' experiences of vulnerability and authority that are a result of their relationships with teachers and students within the school. The third layer of the lotus is the conceptual category of *Truth and Hope* and represents a more personal expression of SRE pedagogy where SRE teachers desire to share their belief with their students. In *Truth and Hope,* the SRE teachers' belief that God's word is the absolute truth guides what they want to teach their students. However, the way that the SRE teachers teach this truth to their student results in a contingent expression of truth that is individualised for a particular classroom context. In addition, two kinds of hope also come into play in the SRE teachers' pedagogy. Firstly, all of the SRE teachers express an eschatological hope that in the future their students will accept that the claims they have made about God are true. They also have an immediate hope that their students will be engaged with their lessons, and that all will go well during their time in the classroom. In this study, SRE pedagogy is defined as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied. This chapter explores the SRE teachers' experience of, and beliefs about truth and hope to more fully understand their pedagogy.

The SRE teachers' interviews and journals are replete with their observations about issues of truth and hope. Analysis of the SRE teachers' interviews and journals led to the construction of thirty five focused codes related to truth and hope. Four categories were

constructed from these focused codes: (i) engaging children with stories and questions, (ii) sowing seeds, (iii) teaching the truth, and (iv) using available resources. Although seemingly disparate, as I constructed the conversations, returned to the data and the coding, and read relevant literature the interplay between hope and truth became clear. Truth and hope operate in reciprocal harmony in SRE pedagogy; each informing the other and influencing the pedagogical decisions of the SRE teachers. The constructed conversation can be found in Appendix 7.1 and Appendix 7.2 shows the movement from focused codes to conceptual category in the analysis process.

While some of the focused codes were derived from a large number of initial codes, others represent a small number of initial codes. Regardless of the number of initial codes that lead to a focused code, all focused codes are deemed to be important in the analysis. This is because even when only one person says something, it is important in the early stages of the analysis for their words to be included. For example, the focused code "Teaching about Easter" only had three initial codes: (i) teaching about Easter, (ii) teaching difficult ideas, and (iii) teaching the foundation of the Christian faith. However, a significant point was made about the challenge of teaching the truth of Easter in this code. Nerida points out that she finds the Easter story difficult to teach to children:

> *because (a) it's violent and (b) conceptually it's very beyond [sic] for young children. And yet it's what the whole bible is centred around and so you can't not teach it.*

In a similar way Joshua believes that *"there's such a kaleidoscope [in the Easter story] that they won't take in".* He prefers not to *"put too much emphasis on the gruesome side of the cross";* instead he chooses to *"emphasise God's love, [and that] Jesus has love for them personally".*

Nerida and Joshua's comments about teaching the Easter story exemplify the interplay between truth and hope. There are "truth" aspects of the Easter story that both SRE teachers want to emphasise: its central importance in understanding the message of Christianity and God's love as revealed in the story. However, there are other aspects of the truth of Easter that are challenging to teach children: its violence, the abstract nature of the story, and the complicated details (the kaleidoscope) of the story. Nerida and Joshua's hope is also revealed in their comments. Although the story is *"difficult to teach"* to children, Nerida believes she has to teach it because her personal hope lies in the Easter story. Joshua is also

hopeful that his students will *"know that Jesus has love for them personally"*. Nerida and Joshua's motivation to teach comes from their desire to teach the truth of Easter to their students and their hope in what Easter means to them regardless of the challenges that this story poses.

Truth and hope are important in the SRE teachers' pedagogy. The SRE teachers' belief in the truth and hope of their faith provides the motivation for them to continue teaching SRE. Their understanding of truth and its source also provides the content for their SRE teaching. Truth is described by the SRE teachers in two ways, as (i) absolute truth and (ii) contingent truth. Hope is also expressed in two ways, as: (i) eschatological hope and (ii) immediate hope. In sections 7.1 and 7.2 I discuss how the SRE teachers' pedagogy is influenced by absolute and contingent truth, and eschatological and immediate hope respectively. In section 7.3 I discuss three examples of how truth and hope are enacted in an SRE classroom: (i) stories, (ii) questions and (iii) proselytising.

7.1   Truth

In faith-based schools, the truth claims of the faith of the school are typically taught as absolute truth in RE. In contrast, in public schools there may be a smorgasbord of truth as each different SRE provider presents the truth claims of its faith during timetabled SRE. However, for the SRE teachers in this study there is only one religious truth; the truth of their faith that is found in God's word. How the SRE teachers view this truth is important for understanding their pedagogy because the epistemological lens through which a teacher views pedagogy will undergird all pedagogical practice (Reagan, 1999) and consequently influence a teacher's methodological decisions in the classroom. Epistemology is "a way of knowing and organising thinking" (Tochon & Munby, 1993, p. 206) that guides how a person acts. Hence, all pedagogy and pedagogical practice are underpinned with questions of epistemology because how a teacher thinks about knowledge and what it means to know will influence all aspects of how s/he teaches (Meredith, 1995, Reagan, 1999).

7.1.1   Absolute Truth

Personal epistemology focuses on what an individual believes about knowledge: where it resides, how someone comes to know and how it is constructed (Hofer, 2008). It is clear that a numinous and eschatological truth is important to the SRE teachers in this study. All of the SRE teachers share a common epistemology when they express the belief that God

is the source of truth and that He reveals this knowledge to His people through His word, most commonly through the words in the bible. They believe that for their students to come to know about God they must share the bible with them. This truth is described as an "*absolute truth*" by Nerida; her "*foundation*" by Nicole, and something that "*doesn't change*" by Stephen. Several of the SRE teachers also express their belief that although the truth of God's word is not recognised by everyone as absolute truth, it is still the truth. They also express the belief that knowing God is about having a relationship with Him and emphasise the importance of developing their relationship with God and their relationship with the students they teach. This relational understanding of God is an important aspect of the SRE teachers' epistemology because they believe that the more they have a relationship with God, the more they will know the truth.

Stephen describes God's word as "*the truth that can transform*", and goes on to explain: "*making sure God's word is central to an SRE lesson is critically important.*" Nicole also emphasises the centrality of the bible when she says: "*It is the bible that we are teaching. It is the bible as the word of God, the truth that we are teaching*". Because of the centrality of the bible in teaching about God, all the SRE teachers want their students to hear the bible stories, and think deeply about the words in the bible. Some of the teachers also want their students to memorise bible verses. For example, Shirley explains that she believes memorising bible verses plays an important role "*on the rest of their life... [because] when they do need to call on God, this verse will be in their memory.*

The SRE teachers all believe that the truth they teach changes lives. Several of them cite their own personal experience of how knowing God has changed them. For example, Jane describes how knowing God has changed her life:

> *Being compelled for Christ is something that [happened] when I became a Christian twenty six years ago. That day, that joy, has been a compulsion for Christ. What I do; I throw myself into it. Being in relationship with our loving Lord who puts into our hearts what we don't have at an earthly level. Being compelled for Christ is that realisation that whatever I do doesn't really matter as long as I'm living for Christ.*

Similar to the delegated authority that SRE teachers believe they receive from God, they all also believe that they go as ambassadors of God representing God's truth into classrooms. Because of this, Eleanor explains that when she goes to teach:

> *My heart is in my mouth every week. I feel that I have a great responsibility to be a great ambassador for Christ, and a real person to the children.*

In a similar way, Beth's aim is that her faith will be obvious to her students and not "*be separate from anything else in my life*" because she believes that her students "*will base some of their opinions about Christians, or Christ, or even church on what they see of me*". Stephen also explains that:

> *... my life as a teacher either reinforces the truth of the gospel that I'm teaching because I live it or it gutters it. So what is absolutely critical is that I'm growing in godliness and that I'm an SRE teacher who lives this truth out. Another [classroom] teacher can be in the school and say 'you need to care for the other students' but be a terrible husband and father and still do his job well, but for an SRE teacher [these things] need to go hand in hand.*

Baurain (2012) points out that a teacher's faith will influence his/her pedagogy because "teachers never stop embodying who they are" (Baurain, 2012, pp. 314-315). This is reflected in these statements by Eleanor, Beth and Stephen. Their faith in God comes from their belief in His truth. Their understanding of truth influences how they behave in their classrooms because they so closely link their behaviour and their teaching to an understanding of the truth they teach.

According to Watson and Uecker (2007) a teacher's belief in an absolute truth can lead to a transmissive approach where the teacher is understood to be the holder of knowledge that needs to be passed onto the student receiving that knowledge. As discussed in Chapter Two, Freire (2005) describes transmissive teaching as the banking approach to education. In a banking approach, the student is an object who knows nothing, is taught, listens, disciplined, and compliant; while the teacher is the subject of the learning process who knows everything, and gets to teach, think, talk, discipline, and choose what will happen. Palmer (1990, p. 12) describes the teaching that results from these mirrored object/subject relationships as a spectator sport where "students are kept in the grandstand so they can watch the pros play the knowledge game". Elissa captures the object/subject nature of a banking approach when she describes the knowledge of the students in her kindergarten class:

> *I knew that* they *had learned something because I knew where they started. I knew they knew nothing. I did a little chant that was the four phrases that I thought were the four most important things, and we did that for the whole year. So [by the end]*

they knew those four things: God made us, God knows us, God loves us and God came to visit us.

Nicole also describes a banking approach when she explains how she tries to find interesting ways to:

> *… impart God's word that are interesting and yet informative, so that they are getting real gems of God's word in a package that they can understand and enjoy receiving.*

However, while Nicole wants to *"impart"* the content in a *"package"*, like other SRE teachers, her pedagogy is more complex than simply depositing information. She is concerned that the content is interesting, informative, understandable and enjoyable. When Nicole describes her lessons in her interviews and journals it is clear that she is attempting to do more than fill her students heads with information.

The SRE teachers in this study express the belief that God's word predominantly resides in the bible and is unchanging. However, as they describe how they teach their students about this absolute truth they acknowledge the complexity of what they are teaching and how students have to construct their own understanding of what they are teaching. Nerida, a trained classroom teacher, captures this when she describes the complexity of teaching absolute truth:

> *Well, it is an absolute truth, but it's still a relational thing. It's not black and white… SRE is teaching faith, which is teaching an absolute, but there is more to it than that… With a constructivist approach you acknowledge that a learner is coming at it with a whole lot of background knowledge and prerequisite skills and they are learning from there*

Nerida's classroom teaching experience gives her the confidence to both acknowledge the role of the students' background knowledge and skills when she teaches, and to allow her students to explore the subject. Her understanding of using background knowledge and skills to help students construct knowledge, is reflected in her later statement that learning about faith is "*just exploring it just like you explore any other piece of information".*

In summary, the SRE teachers express the belief that God is the source of truth and this truth is revealed in the bible and in the relationship they have with Him. They also express the belief that this truth has the power to transform and change their students' lives in the same way it has the power to transform their own lives. The importance of this truth is one of the reasons why many of the SRE teachers experience vulnerability when they teach

and also why their calling from a God who is in authority is important. Although the literature suggests that belief in absolute truth can lead to a transmissive approach, this is not always the case with the SRE teachers in this study. While there may be times where they move to an approach similar to Freire's (2005) banking approach, their descriptions of preparing and teaching SRE do not reflect the primacy of this approach in their pedagogy.

The SRE teachers do not indicate in their interviews or their journals that they believe they can simply deposit truth into their students. If this was the case, they would happily spend the lesson reading directly from the bible to their students. They understand that engaging their students requires getting their students involved in the lesson, and that this takes effort, creativity and listening to their students' questions. Engaging their students is particularly important in SRE because of the context in which SRE is taught. SRE students and parents can opt out of SRE lessons at any time putting pressure on an SRE teacher to ensure that his/her students are engaged in the lesson. In addition, as guests in the classroom, SRE teachers are aware of their classroom teacher and how their lesson is being perceived and this awareness influences how they teach. Engaging their students is also important to the SRE teachers because they put such a high value on what they are teaching. They want their students to interact with, understand and ultimately agree with what they are teaching. SRE teachers make contingent truth moves when they take their absolute truth and work with it in the classrooms to engage their students. When SRE teachers make contingent truth moves they do so in the hope that their students will understand the absolute truth that they teach. These contingent truth moves are discussed in the following section.

7.1.2 Contingent Truth

The SRE teachers' belief that God's word is the absolute truth guides what they want to teach their students. It is this view of truth that motivates the SRE teachers to return to their classrooms week after week. However, the way that the SRE teachers teach this truth in their lessons (their methodology) can result in a provisional expression of truth that is individualised for a particular classroom context. I have called this movement from absolute truth to contingent truth, the "contingent truth move". For example, contingent truth moves are apparent when Pearl prepares a lesson. She explains that:

> *I read through all the material and then get all my kids' bibles out. I'll find what I think is the best text and the best pictures… And then my whole lesson builds around*

that. I'll use the Teacher Book as my enthuse [sic], I don't always use the suggested ideas.

In this example, as Pearl prepares to teach the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet she works with the bible story and the lesson plan in the Teacher Book. She makes a contingent truth move when she works with children's bible story books to find both text and illustrations that she believes her students will relate to. Another contingent truth move is made when she develops her own ideas to introduce the story to her students. Each of these moves is made by Pearl because she hopes her students will understand the absolute truth that she believes is inherent to the story.

Patricia describes teaching SRE as *"offering the students a piece of truth that they might not [otherwise] have the opportunity to hear"*. It is in this *"offering"* that the SRE teachers work at making the absolute truth accessible and engaging for their students by making it appropriate for the situation. Nicole captures this when she describes how she wants to *"impart God's word…in a package"*. Similarly, while Nerida describes teaching SRE in terms of an *"absolute truth"* she also expresses the belief that SRE is a place where students *"come at it with a whole lot of background knowledge and prerequisite skills and they are learning from there"* indicating a constructivist approach to SRE that moves from absolute truth to contingent truth. Both the context in which SRE is taught and the nature of the subject shape how SRE teachers approach teaching the truth. It is not that they change the truth rather they work with it by making choices about how they will teach it and what they will include or leave out. This is influenced by three factors: (i) the teaching conditions they face, (ii) the challenge of teaching from a book that is not always appropriate for children, and (iii) the Teacher Books they use.

7.1.2.1   The teaching conditions SRE teachers face

There are three particular teaching conditions faced by SRE teachers that influence their move to contingent truth: (a) the presence of a classroom teacher can make them wary of what they say, (b) the time they have to teach is inflexible, and (c) they do not always have access to bibles, their source of truth, in their lessons. Firstly, when a classroom teacher is present, the SRE teachers are often more careful about what they say to the students. For example, Patricia is particularly aware of her classroom teacher because she teaches at a school where there are some parents who are vocal opponents to SRE being taught in schools and because there is a *"lot of the angst against SRE in the media"*. She is therefore careful to

"watch what I say" and as a result she sometimes *"errs on the side of caution"*. Alicia is also careful about what she says because she wonders *"what does what I say sound like to the children or to the unbelieving teacher who is listening?"*

Secondly, the majority of the SRE teachers describe the challenge of getting through their planned lessons in the time they have in the classroom. This time challenge hampers the number of times they make a contingent truth move. The SRE teachers believe they have something important for their students to learn, but they want them to explore the truth so that they will construct their own understanding and claim the truth as their own. However, the time constraints of SRE can hinder this constructivist approach. Once again drawing from Patricia's experience, she claims that she wants to make her lesson engaging for the students but is also challenged by the time limitations of SRE. She explains that she finds it challenging to *"grab the kids' attention… make them really enjoy the half hour… and balancing that with actually wanting to give them truth"* all in thirty minutes.

Unlike other teaching where a teacher may choose to lengthen the time spent on a lesson so s/he can continue teaching, SRE teachers must stop their lesson when their allotted time is up regardless of whether they have finished the lesson. Alicia, a trained classroom teacher, captures this difference between classroom teaching and SRE teaching when she explains that:

> *If you're in charge of a class [because you are the classroom teacher] you can go along a path if the children are interested. You can readjust the timetable, whereas in SRE you want to do that, you want to follow the students' interest, or make it more interesting for them with activities that will enthuse them, but you are on such a tight time schedule that it's really hard to do that.*

In their determination to complete a lesson, SRE teachers can become knowledge transmitters to ensure that they cover the content of their lessons. For example, Patricia explains that she *"sums up what we've learned to fit into the time we have."* Similarly, Beth explains that when she is running out of time, she will *"talk about what's in the Student Workbooks, I'll hold one up in front of them, but we won't do it"*.

Thirdly, many of the SRE teachers want to use bibles in their lessons because they believe they are the source of truth that they are teaching. However, their students do not always have access to bibles because of the conditions that they teach in. Most of the SRE teachers who want to use bibles must bring them each week because there are no bibles in the

classrooms. Many make the decision not to bother, for example, John acknowledges that although it would be good for them to read from the bible in his lessons, he "*can't be bothered taking the bibles in because they're heavy"*. Bart would also like his students to use bibles in their lessons but when he teaches his large classes as an assembly he cannot give out bibles to all his students. Without student bibles, the SRE teacher becomes a mediator of content because their students cannot interact with the primary source. These three teaching conditions influence the SRE teachers' pedagogy by acting as modifiers in their contingent truth moves. It is also the nature of the bible that influences the SRE teachers' pedagogy, and I now turn to this.

7.1.2.2 *Teaching from a book that is not always appropriate for children*

The distinctive nature of the content that is taught in SRE influences the pedagogy of the SRE teachers. The bible is the sacred text of Christianity, it is not a children's book or a curriculum for religious education. Therefore, the SRE teachers have to take this sacred text that represents their absolute truth and carefully consider how they will teach it to their students. This step of moving from absolute truth to contingent truth looks different for each of the SRE teachers. Some of them describe how they shy away from certain bible stories and topics, while others believe that the nothing should be left out when they teach SRE. Bart tries to create a classroom environment where his year six students can ask "*about the taboo subjects and get a reasonable response"*. In a similar fashion, Renee expresses the belief that everything in the bible should be taught to the students. She explains that her role is to teach the bible "*clearly and truthfully"* without leaving things out, and not to make it into a "*fairy tale"*. She draws from how the lesson plan for the plagues of Moses in a Teacher Book "*left out the blood around the doors"*. However, she believes this detail should not be omitted because "*that's the whole point"*. For Renee, it is important that she takes the stories straight from the bible and not leave anything out because "*you make it hazy and ... it's not real"*.

However, several of the SRE teachers are concerned about teaching some of the stories and themes of the bible. For example, Pearl describes how her year one class struggles with understanding the parables because "*they are such concrete thinkers*". Although her students enjoyed the stories, "*to bring it back to the lesson that if we build our lives on the word of God, it's too big a jump"*. Joshua expresses his ambivalence about the creation story, although "*I don't dispute it in front of the children"*, the "*gruesome side of the cross"* and the devil:

> *I'm there to teach them about the love of God, not the fear of the devil. The devil doesn't get an airing in my classroom.*

Joshua explains that he omits parts of some bible stories because he wants to "*emphasise God's love*" and because the stories are complex for children. Nerida is also concerned about some of aspects of the Easter story. She wants to tell the story without "*going on about the agony and pain*" and is happy to use story books that are not "*gory*".

It is important to note that while the SRE teachers want their students to understand about the death and resurrection of Jesus, they do not want to emphasise the more violent aspects of the crucifixion. This is due to a concern about the sensitivity of discussing such issues in the context where they teach, and represents an important contingent truth move that SRE teachers make. They want their students to understand the importance of the Easter narrative to the Christian faith for SRE teachers because, as Elissa explains, "*Easter is what defines us [Christians] and is everything about us.*" When Elissa teaches her kindergarten class about Easter she wants them to understand that "*Easter started off as the celebration and memory of Jesus' death*". Similarly, when Lisa was discussing Jesus' death with her students she explained that "*He actually died, he stopped breathing. He was dead*".

In sum, the SRE teachers' belief that the bible is one of the sources of the absolute truth that they bring to SRE influences their pedagogy. However, they make contingent truth moves because of the nature of the content of the bible. These moves are also influenced by the directions of the Teacher Books that are discussed now.

7.1.2.3   Using the Teacher Books
One of the distinctive aspects of SRE pedagogy is that the majority of SRE teaches use lessons that have been written by someone else. As has been previously noted, twenty of the twenty three SRE teachers in this study use the SRE teaching programs published by SRE providers. The lesson plans in the Teacher Books provide activities for the SRE teachers to use as they teach. In effect, these suggested activities give the SRE teachers a selection of contingent truth moves that they can use in their lessons. However, many of the SRE teachers describe how they take the lesson plans and adapt them for the particular context of their classroom. For example, in her journals Beth describes how "*I thought we'd do things a little differently [to the lesson in the Teacher Book]*" because it was the end of term. These changes to the Teacher Books represent a secondary contingent truth move where the SRE teachers take control of the regulative discourse back from the curriculum writers by

determining how truth will be taught in their lessons. For example, Shirley, a trained classroom teacher, selectively uses the Teacher Books and Student Workbooks:

> *I found the Student Books were a distraction [because] they were going ahead or back doing those mindless word games. And there were lessons that clearly wouldn't be taught due to time factors amongst other reasons. So I found this year by ripping out the lessons week by week I had some control over the lesson itself and it didn't matter which one I skipped.*

In this action, Shirley overrides the contingent truth move of the curriculum writer, making a "double contingent truth move". She concludes that:

> *By taking the time constraint away, Instead of teaching SRE you are teaching children. And it becomes far less didactic, you can interact.*

It is not only trained classroom teachers like Shirley who make a double contingent truth move with the Teacher Books. Eleanor describes in her journal how she changed the lesson plan in the Teacher Book.

> *I read the passages Matthew 7:711 and Luke 18:1-7. I decided that the drama and passage focus for the lesson enabled students to get a picture of God that was not biblical so wrote my own short drama based on Luke 11:5-8.*

Eleanor appears to be unhappy with the direction that the writer of the Teacher Book had made and rewrites the drama to be more in keeping with her understanding of the truth she is teaching.

In this discussion it is clear that the way that the SRE teachers approach the truth they want to teach is influenced by an acceptance of the necessity to shape absolute truth to the needs of their students. This shaping is important as it enables their students to engage and understand what they are being taught. The contingent truth moves SRE teachers make are influenced by the limitations of the context in which they teach: the presence of a classroom teacher in the room; the limited time they have; and the necessity for many of them to bring bibles with them to class. In addition, the nature of the subject matter taught in SRE also necessitates the SRE teachers making contingent truth moves. They make these moves with both the bible themes and stories, and with the suggested activities in the Teacher Books many of them teach from.

The SRE teachers believe in absolute truth. It is their expressed belief in the truth of their religious faith that they take with them into the classrooms. And it is hope that motivates

them to continue taking the truth into the classrooms. In this way, truth and hope complement each other; where truth is mainly about content and hope is mainly about feelings and expectations. This discussion now explores how truth influences the SRE teachers' pedagogy.

7.2　Hope

Truth and hope come together in the SRE teachers' pedagogy. While truth inspires the content, hope looks to the future. However, the SRE teachers' hope is firmly planted in the truth they believe; there is no hope without truth and conversely, there is no truth without hope. Just as there are two kinds of truth that are important in the SRE teachers' pedagogy; there are also two kinds of hope: eschatological and immediate. The SRE teachers often describe their eschatological hope that God will somehow act in their students' lives in the future so that their students will accept the absolute truth claims of Christianity. Cathy captures this hope when she explains that:

> *Y*ou're investing a year with them, but really you want to change their entire lives, you want to change their outlook on God.*

This kind of hope motivates the SRE teachers to continue teaching even in the difficult times, or when they see no evidence that their teaching is having an impact on their students. This is exemplified in the length of time that both Joshua and Mary have taught: Joshua has been teaching for twenty nine years and is still teaching at ninety-two, and Mary has been teaching for forty three years and is eighty one. It is Joshua's trust in God's grace that keeps him teaching even as he ages:

> *Each year I say to the Lord, 'it is getting a bit more difficult but with your grace I will keep going'.*

The SRE teachers' eschatological hope and immediate hope are closely woven together. Their immediate hope is grounded in their belief that God is actively involved in the world, and specifically involved in what happens in their classrooms. Although they teach with the future in mind, they are hopeful that their lessons will have immediate impact. Beth illustrates the connectedness of eschatological and immediate hope when she says:

> *I think a lot of the time we're not going to know until we get to heaven whether we've hit the mark. And other times I go "yes!" [because] I know I've hit the mark. That's an added blessing, I think, when you know that kid's picked up on something.*

Both eschatological and immediate hope are important to the SRE teachers' expressed belief that God is intimately involved in their own and other people's lives. They expect that

God will take what they do and use it in the students' lives (eschatological hope) in the future. This is what Jane is describing when she says that she hopes that *"the kids will be open to take in the truth even if it is not going to bear any fruit for many years".* As is discussed in Chapter Five they also believe that they need to have an ongoing relationship with God so that He can guide them in the classroom (immediate hope). Nerida emphasises this when she observes that:

> *I can prepare a whizz-bang lesson, and it might be great, but if God's not in it, or if I haven't included God in the process then He will do with it what He wants.*

Eschatological and immediate hope are similar to Darren Webb's[41] (Webb, 2007, 2008a, 2008b, 2013) notion of limited hope and absolute hope. Like immediate hope, limited hope relates to the occurrence of an earthly event; for the SRE teachers, it is the hope that the lesson will go well. Absolute or eschatological hope takes the form of "I hope in thee for us" (Webb, 2008a, p. 118). In sections 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 I discuss this patient, eschatological hope and the immediate hope of the SRE teachers respectively.

7.2.1 Eschatological Hope

In Christian theology, eschatology "deals with a network of beliefs relating to the end of life and history, whether of an individual or of the world in general" (McGrath, 1994, p. 465). The eschatological hope of the SRE teachers is that their students will accept Christian teaching before they reach the end of their lives. For many of the SRE teachers, this eschatological hope is expressed in terms of sowing seeds. For example, Julia describes SRE as the place to *"plant some seeds about who Jesus is and what it is to be a Christian".*

Pearl explains that teaching SRE always brings her back to the Parable of the Sower[42]. In this parable, Jesus tells the story of a farmer scattering seeds that fall on four different soils and grow or wither depending on where the seeds fall. The SRE teachers extend this metaphor and also talk about SRE teaching in terms of "bearing fruit" that they all accept may not happen for a long time. Eleanor explains that *"it might be ten years before the fruit is seen, we might never see it, but someone else sees it".* Because there is an expectation that the

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[41] Darren Webb has written extensively on hope. Among others, he draws from the writing of Gabriel Marcel's *Homo Viator: Introduction to the Metaphysic of Hope*, Jurgen Moltmann's *Theology of Hope*, Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of Hope*, and Gustavo Gutierrex's *A Theology of Liberation.*

[42] The Parable of the Sower appears in the three Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark and Luke.

seed will take a long time to grow, the SRE teachers find it difficult to evaluate the impact of their teaching and rest I their hope that God will do something with the seed. This is exemplified in Pearl's description:

> *I see these kids as good soil, and you can't plant the seed in any better soil than these kids' hearts… It's an act of faith because the seed goes in and I'm never going to see it. I might see some little shoots or some signs of it taking root, but it's going to take many years. My faith is that the word of God is a living seed, and there is power of life in that.*

An eschatological hope provides the "hoper" with the patience to "await an essentially unforeseen future" (Webb, 2007, p. 71) and allows him/her

> … to face the future with courageous patience, to stand firm and abide, securely confident that a solution to life's trials will, through the agency of some trusted Other, be found. (Webb, 2008b, p. 199)

Julia captures the courageous patience of eschatological hope when she says:

> *My motivation is not looking for an immediate response or glory. But this is what I believe and stake my life on, and how I demonstrate this is turning up week after week. Every now and then I'd rather stay at work, but I think "no this is my commitment". It doesn't seem like a sacrifice, it just seems valuable to be doing it.*

This patient, eschatological hope is also beautifully illustrated in Nicole's story about a boy that she taught SRE for all of his primary school years (Kindergarten to year six). Nicole works at a school pedestrian crossing and for several years after he finished primary school, she saw him as he walked to and from school.

> *All through the years he'd say 'there's no God'. He'd say 'can you prove there's a God?' and I'd say 'I can't prove it but I have a relationship with this God and you need to discover this for yourself'. He left for high school and he'd pass the crossing [where I worked] every day and say 'I know there's no God'. I gave him a bible in year 6, he burnt his. He took great pleasure in telling me that. He even abused me once at the crossing about it all. Over the years he would come to me, and he was so knowledgeable about the bible trying to prove me wrong, he'd go onto the internet to compare it with other religions. Finally he went off and joined the army and I haven't heard from him since.*

Nicole persevered with the boy because of her eschatological hope that God was at work and that he would finally discover God for himself.

In sum, eschatological hope is about sowing seeds for the future. In a teaching environment where the SRE teachers see their students for a limited time each week and where they are not always welcome, the Parable of the Sower gives them hope in their

vulnerability. The SRE teachers can face their own, and their students' future, because of their eschatological hope that these seeds will grow and bear fruit. This hope is based in their expressed belief that God is in control and will act to determine what happens to the seed that they have sown. It is built on the foundation of the truth that the SRE teachers believe in. Their eschatological hope enables the SRE teachers to not be overwhelmed by the challenges of teaching SRE but to trust that they are making a difference for the future. Although they have a long-term view, they are also hopeful that their teaching will go well from week to week so that their students can engage with the truth they bring to their lessons.

7.2.2   Immediate Hope

The SRE teachers also have an immediate hope that their lessons will engage their students and all will go well in the classroom. Their immediate hope is also closely linked with their contingent truth. It is the absolute truth and their eschatological hope that motivates and encourages the SRE teachers to continually return to their classrooms even when teaching is challenging. Similarly, it is the contingent truth and their immediate hope that encourages and motivates them to modify their teaching both from week to week, and within their lesson, to ensure that their students are engaged. There are two aspects to this immediate hope: (i) hoping that their lesson will go well and (ii) hoping that God will be involved in their lesson.

7.2.2.1   *Hoping the lesson goes well*

Like most classroom teachers, SRE teachers hope that their lesson will go well. This is reflected in their concern that the time they are at school is not wasted by disruptive students, their expressed joy when a lesson goes well, and their hope that their students will behave well while they teach. The SRE teachers are challenged by the times when their students are not behaving appropriately and the lessons does not go according to plan. For example, when Avril's students misbehave she finds teaching "*really hard work*" and she "*just can't do it as well [as at other times]."* For Beth these times "*feel like just one big battle"*. She struggles with these challenging times because

> *I can't see how I can help them understand about God and Jesus and loving one another or being kind and forgiving if I'm glad to get out of the room.*

Jane is concerned for how these classroom challenges will affect the other students more than how it affects her. When she talks about the year where she was bullied by a student that is

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discussed in previous chapters, she explains that "I *was fine, it wasn't particularly nice but I was more concerned that the time was being wasted with the other kids.*"

The SRE teachers' immediate hope for their lesson is fulfilled when their teaching goes according to plan and their students are engaged and participating in the lesson. When this occurs, the SRE teachers' immediate hope is fulfilled and they respond joyfully. For example, Avril explains that one or her classes *"can be more energetic [than other classes] and they can get a bit noisy"* so she was pleased when they played a game and *"they did it really, really well"* and then after the bible story understood what the aim of the lesson was. Avril expresses joy when she concluded that "*one boy shot his hand up and he said 'I know why we did that balloon game, it's to show us how to work together'"*. However, there are times when their immediate hope for the lesson is not fulfilled and the SRE teachers find teaching challenging. At these times it is their eschatological hope and their understanding of truth that sustains them.

7.2.2.2   Hoping that God is involved in the lesson

Many of the SRE teachers express the hope that God is involved in their lessons. This immediate hope is evident in their lesson preparation and in their descriptions of what happens in the classroom. Although many of the SRE teachers emphasise the importance of preparing their lessons, they also anticipate that God may use His authority to take their lessons in a different and better direction. Alicia's description of teaching SRE as "*presenting God's word and letting the Holy Spirit do the work*" and Janes' description of praying before the lesson to acknowledge that *"God is the one in control"* both illustrate a common belief amongst the SRE teachers that God uses His authority to control what happens in the classroom. This belief is a form of immediate hope where the SRE teachers entrust what they do to God, believing that He will do something with their teaching. This is why Alicia emphasises the importance of prayer before class. She notes that "*all too often I forget to pray about a lesson"* and trusts in her own planning rather than God looking after her.

7.3   Truth and hope enacted

As the SRE teachers teach in their classrooms, the absolute truth of their faith shifts to contingent truth, and the eschatological hope for their students moves to immediate hope. This movement is clearly illustrated in the way that the SRE teachers use stories and questions in their teaching, and in their view of proselytising.

7.3.1 Stories

Storytelling is one way that contingent truth and immediate hope is enacted in the SRE classroom. The SRE teachers work creatively with the bible to present the bible stories in a way that is engaging and interesting for their students. Pearl points out that *"the story is the main gist of the lesson".* Jane also puts storytelling at the centre of her lessons when she explains that

> *I want to say "hi", tick the roll off, have a quick interaction and then get into the story. And all the time [I'm] thinking of the relational aspect of where the story is going.*

Many of the SRE teachers spend a lot of time in their interviews describing how they tell bible stories, the preparation they do, and how they help their students to explore the bible stories. This emphasis is due to their expressed belief that the source of absolute truth is God's word, the bible. As such, the bible stories that the SRE teachers tell their students do not just point to the truth, they believe them to be the truth. Storytelling is therefore important to the SRE teachers because it is how their students come to hear the truth of God's word. Hope is also connected to storytelling. It is a common hope of the SRE teachers that as their students hear the stories, they will take hold of the truth and take it as their own. This is why Shirley explains that the bible stories *"can be remembered and applied later on".* The SRE teachers' eschatological hope is driven by their understanding of the metanarrative of the bible; of God's story. This is the story that motivates them to continue teaching week after week regardless of their guest status, or the vulnerability they experience.

The SRE teaching resources also emphasise the importance of the bible stories. In both the Connect (Cassis, 2012) and Search (Paddison, 2007) semester one stage 2 Teacher Books, all but one of the lessons are based on a bible story; and in Walking With Jesus: Pathways of Discipleship (Donnelly, 2008) sixteen out of twenty lessons use a biblical narrative. Consequently, telling a bible story takes up a large part of each of the SRE lessons. The SRE teachers spend a lot of time describing how they tell bible stories, how they prepare to tell bible stories, and how they help their students to investigate bible stories through questions and discussions. For example, Stephen describes how he acts out the story, Shirley uses 'dramatic telling', Pearl reads from different bible story books, and many SRE teachers use visual aids. For SRE teachers, the bible story they tell or read provides the content that can then springboard into discussion where students ground the lessons in real life, and

potentially find personal relevance in them. According to John, students are then able to *"think about [the story], they'll work out what it means and start to work out ways of applying it"*.

Because the bible is the source of truth for SRE teachers, they want to ensure that students understand that that the stories they tell come from the bible. This is why Jane always tells the bible story and says *"remember this is not Jane telling it, it is the bible."* The SRE teachers want to be creative in their teaching to help them bring the ideas of the Bible alive to the students. They describe different things they have done such as drawing battle strategies, creating full size drawings of Goliath, bandaging activities, and having a smelly feet competition. There are also times when the SRE teachers read the story directly from appropriate translations of the bible to their students. Although they work hard to make the stories interesting and engaging for the students, they want their students to know they are not made-up stories. They do this by reminding their students that the stories they tell are from the bible, and by using maps and photos to help them understand that the stories are real events that occurred in real places.

The SRE teachers express the belief that the truth about God can be found in the bible. This belief influences the pedagogical choices they make about how they will tell bible stories and explore them with their students. These pedagogical choices drive the contingent truth moves they make as they as they teach their students. However, they always want to ensure that their students understand that the source of the stories they tell is the bible. That is, while making contingent truth moves to enable their students to engage more fully with the bible stories, the SRE teachers want their students to know of the absolute truth they are teaching.

7.3.2 Questioning

The SRE teachers want their students to explore the content they are being taught to create meaningful, personalised knowledge. All of the SRE teachers express the belief that both asking their students questions and encouraging their students to ask questions is an important aspect of engaging students in the lessons. However, the experience of being guests and the vulnerability they feel, coupled with the importance they place on the truth they teach can limit their openness to students exploring knowledge.

Many of the questions that the SRE teachers ask reflect the three part Initiate-Respond-Evaluate (IRE) exchange described by Cazden (2001) and others (For example, Mehan, 1979; Wells & Ball, 2008). In an IRE discourse the teacher initiates classroom action by either telling students to do something or asking them a question (Cazden, 2001; Hellermann, 2003; Myhill & Warren, 2005; Wells & Araus, 2006); speakers take turns, and access to the floor is obtained in systematic ways controlled by the teacher, and a student's success is equated with discovering and providing the teacher with the correct answer. For example, when Beth asks her students "*Can they finish the bible quote, can they fill in the gaps if I ask certain questions*" she initiates a three-part exchange where she asks them to fill the gaps, a student responds, and she evaluates his/her response.

Unlike conversation, IRE discourse is typically controlled by a single conversant, the teacher (Nystrand, Wu, Gamoran, Zeiser, & Long, 2001). As a consequence, the teacher's voice dominates the discourse (Wells & Ball, 2008) and retains a monologic rather than dialogic discourse as s/he "seeks to elicit 'official' answers originating in texts" (Nystrand et al., 2001, p. 3). Keeping the discourse monologic and in the teacher's control rather than dialogic helps a teacher to cover all the learning objectives of the curriculum (Myhill & Warren, 2005) and retain control of what happens in the lesson. The SRE teachers' emphasis on IRE is a result of their need to control the lesson due to time constraints, their guest relationship, and their teaching resources[43]. For example, Pearl "*curtailed the story debrief and question time*" in a lesson when she realised that she was going to run out of time. The guest relationship that Patricia experiences in her classroom means that she is careful about how she answers her students' questions to ensure that she retains control of where the lesson goes.

The teaching resources also influence the SRE teachers' use of an IRE discourse. In this study, nine of the SRE teachers use the *Access* teaching resources (Paddison, 2007), seven use the *Connect* teaching resources (Cassis, 2012), three use the *Godspace* teaching resources, one uses the *Walking with Jesus* teaching resources (Donnelly, 2008), and four create their own teaching resources. The lesson plans in the *Connect, Godspace* and *Walking with Jesus* Teacher Books all follow a three step format that includes an introductory activity; a time of looking at the story; and time for exploring and reflecting on the story. Although many of the SRE teachers modify the lesson plans by making contingent truth moves, they

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[43] It may also be a result of their experience as students; however, this is not evident in the data.

are still guided by the overall approach and by much of the content in the Teacher Books. Therefore the Teacher Books play an important role in determining the pedagogy of the SRE teachers who use them.

An evaluation of the Easter lesson in each of the Teacher Books[44] reveals that these books emphasise a monologic classroom discourse. In the introductory activity teachers are directed to ask "checking" questions: questions that review their recall of previous lessons, questions about the details of a picture they are looking at, and questions that review their knowledge of what happens on Easter Sunday. In the story component of the lesson, teachers creatively tell the story by retelling the story in their own words, directing students to act out the story, or reading it directly from the bible. This storytelling is sometimes accompanied with closed questions to check for recall. Additional content is written as a monologue for teachers to give to their students during this part of the lesson. For example, in the *Connect* Teacher Book (2012, p. 87), the teacher is directed to say:

> Jesus doesn't look like a king, does he? But, remember, God doesn't look on the outside, like people do. Being a king isn't about what you look like. David rescued Israel from Goliath. He rescued them at other times too from other nations who tried to attack them, and so Israel was sometimes at peace. But Jesus rescues us from our sin so that everyone who loves and follows Him will live in peace forever in heaven with Him.

Finally the reflecting component of the lesson in the *Connect* Teacher Book is designed to "draw everything together… [and] to evaluate the students' understanding and allow them to process, internalise and give expression to what has been learned" (Cassis, 2012, p. 5). The *Access* Teacher Books describes this component of the lesson as an opportunity for students "to explore and apply the session's content and construct their own understanding" (Paddison, 2007, p. 5). This is the part of the lesson where students complete the activities in the Student Workbooks, answer questions, participate in a prayer, and share their ideas. It is the part of the lesson where the discourse is most likely to become dialogic. Activities in the Student Books include a cloze activity with an accompanying work bank based on the Easter story; writing an acrostic poem about Easter with a list of words developed by the class; listing three ways they can put the effort into being a friend; putting pictures of the story in the correct order; drawing pictures of the story; writing about how a statement about Easter makes them feel; writing a prayer; and answering two questions: (i)

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[44] The Easter lesson was used because it can be found in all the Teacher Books.

What will happen to those who have faith in Jesus, who love and follow Jesus as their king? and (ii) What might it look like for you to live with Jesus as your king here and now? Many of these activities are checking activities similar to the teachers' checking questions. That is, they check that the students can retell the story rather than asking the students to explore the story. Possible exceptions are writing about the statement, writing a prayer and answering the two questions.

Although the Teacher Books potentially control the instructional discourse by selecting and pacing the knowledge that SRE teachers transmit to their students, it would be simplistic to suggest that where the Teacher Books emphasise a monologic dialogue that the SRE teachers are also monologic. Cathy identifies the monologic nature of the Teacher Books when she points out that *"a lot of [the lesson] is just talking… [and] it doesn't quite get the kids on board"*. Cathy *"puts a fair more effort in"* to rewrite the lesson. Like Cathy, most of the teachers rewrite the lessons for the needs of their classes. For example, Shirley describes how she prepares a lesson from the Teacher Book by first "*sorting out what I will and won't teach from it"*. Although Alicia explains that she teaches *"tightly to the curriculum because I feel safe there"* she still brings her *"own creativity and strengths"* to her lessons. She also describes how she *"occasionally skips a lesson completely… because it's not helpful or wishy washy in terms of what the bible is saying"*.

Stephen, John, Renee, Patricia and Ruby are critical of the Teacher Books because they believe they are too complex or boring. John creates his own lessons that use a similar approach to the Teacher Books where:

> *…you go in you raise the issue, you do the prayers, then you tell the bible story with preferably a big book, then you do a worksheet or an activity.*

Stephen simplifies the lesson structure by building his lesson around telling a bible story and completing an activity sheet: "*a drawing or a colouring in"* for the younger students, and *"the older ones I go into more depth, I interact with them more and there'll be a work sheet for them to answer questions on or interact with the story more"*. Although Renee keeps to the curriculum outline of the Teacher Books: "*I use the outline, I use their bible passage, but I write my own questions",* she has a more dialogic approach to the lessons:

> *We're very active in our class. We always start with prayer, and a lot of times we might have games to do with prayer so that takes time. And then we have the story. We have question times and we do it all different ways so that we don't get bored.*

While believing in an absolute truth that they want their students to understand and know, the SRE teachers acknowledge that they want their students to discover faith for themselves (their eschatological hope). They emphasise the importance of their students asking questions so that they can decide for themselves what they think. For example, Joshua explains to the boys in his class who do not believe what he is teaching:

> *That's OK you're free to believe, I'm not here to stuff it down your throats. I've told you the stories, I believe the stories. OK you don't believe but keep an open mind.*

Bart's description of the way he deals with the student's questions reveals how he moves from absolute truth to contingent truth. In the following excerpt, Bart has a lesson plan and material he wants his students to "*absorb*" (absolute truth), but he is willing to *"abandon"* everything to discuss the questions (contingent truth). Bart's conclusion that the event is *"God given*" also reveals a belief that God is in control in his lesson even when the lesson moves away from its plan.

> *During the weekly [lesson] it's a great joy when I know the kids are involved and attentive, but even better when they are inquiring and I get a bunch of questions. My philosophy is that I will abandon the actual lesson plan when it is appropriate because the kids are asking such good questions…. When you get to the stage where they have absorbed enough of the material that they can respond with their own ideas and questions and you can field them as a group discussion that's just phenomenal. That's gold. It's God given.*

Bart is not the only SRE teacher in the study who encourages the students to ask questions. Patricia believes that SRE is "*not just you presenting something, it's getting students to ask questions and respond to your questions"*. Daniel describes how he has "*stopped the lesson and been at their behest, and let the questions flow";* and Eleanor explains that:

> *Sometimes the best lessons happen when the questions come from the children and you just totally divert for about five or ten minutes because they are just asking so many amazing questions.*

It is at these critical moments when the SRE teachers must decide whether to move away from their lesson plan. These critical moments are initiated either by the students' questions or by what the SRE teachers perceive as the Holy Spirit guiding them to change their lesson. For Bart, these moments are *"the pinnacle"* that he "*goes the whole year working towards"*. Eleanor also reveals her hope that these moments will occur because it is at these moments that the *"best lessons happen… and you just totally divert for about five or*

ten minutes because they are just asking so many amazing questions". The following description of a lesson Nicole taught provides an excellent example of a student initiated critical moment:

> *... we started talking about Easter. One boy put his hand up, and then another, we had twenty minutes of questions... We didn't even get the Student Workbooks out, I felt the kids were connected, I was answering their questions [that] were coming from their heart... I thought I better stop but more time went.*

Nerida describes a similar experience with a new girl in her year one SRE class who *"was just filled with questions, amazing questions... So I just answered them as best I could"*.

Jane describes a lesson she taught on the Parable of the Prodigal son where after telling the story, *"they had so many questions"*. The following excerpt from her description of the ensuing discussion illustrates how Jane approaches questioning in her lessons. As it is an excellent example of the way that an SRE teacher uses questioning in her lesson I have included a lengthy excerpt from Jane's interview. In the excerpt I have put Jane talking in bold and underlined Jane's description of what her students said. The rest of the excerpt is in italics and is Jane's commentary on what took place.

> *My goodness they had so many questions. I wanted to focus on the older son.* **"Hands up who is the oldest in the family?"** *I'm not saying this is right, but they were so focused on family and not being fair and who can't relate to that. All of that good interaction, but at the end where they all got the wrong answers!* **"At the end what does it tell us about God?"** *The answers were not what I wanted to hear. In the end one boy said it* <u>"God forgives everybody, but God only forgives if we come back."</u> *I just found myself drawing out relationships, that older son, the younger son, the father; they kind of got all that.* **"And what about working with the pigs? What is the lowest job you can think of",** *probably working with pigs or cleaning up poo.*
>
> *So we talked about those things in families, and not being fair. [It was] all good interaction, but then in the last five or ten minutes we talked about* **"so what does this tell us about God?"** *[There were] all sorts of answers. And they all have a turn which shows me they're thinking. One girl said,* <u>"it tells us there is a narrow and a wide gate"</u>. *I thought that was terrific.* **"Tell me more about that?"** <u>"Well, God's love is for everyone the wide gate, but not everyone comes through because it's too hard."</u> *Two [things they said] worried me:* <u>"God's love is for people who are good"</u>, **"tell me a little bit about what you think good is".** <u>"Being nice to people"</u>, **"yes, we have to be nice to people if we want to love God, but it's hard to always be nice".** *I was a little bit surprised about their answers about who God is. And maybe I had high expectations, I wanted them to say that God is the loving God who forgives everybody but we need to come to him. I got none of the repentance I had to push and push and push, until one girl said* <u>"oh we have to be sorry"</u>. *I just said,* **"God's love, what does it tell us about God's love? He welcomes everyone in who is sorry who comes**

before Him and it is ongoing. But what does that mean? It means I go every day to God and say sorry. And when we are truly sorry He forgives us. What is this story telling us with the son who goes off and spends all the money and comes back to his father, about our God?" By the end of it, I said *"if you go away with one thing today you need to go home with God is a loving God, and that picture of the son coming home is what we are like with God."* And I've held them, because I know they are listening.

Jane is not content to simply tell the story of the Prodigal Son. She wants her students to explore the content of the story. Earlier in her interview Jane explains that she believes an important aspect of teaching SRE is to not only tell the bible stories but to help her students consider *"where are they fitting into the bible stories?"* and *"Where is their place in it?"* This is what she hopes will emerge from the classroom discussion about the Prodigal Son and why she is so pleased that the story resulted in *"so many questions"*.

There are times in this excerpt where an IRE discourse is clearly taking place. Questions like *"hands up who is the oldest in the family?"*, and *"What is the lowest job you can think of"* are good examples of the initiate component of the IRE discourse. Jane also evaluates her students' responses, for example *"they were not the answers I wanted to hear"* and *"I thought that was terrific"*. However, there are also examples of genuine dialogue occurring; for example, *"we talked about those things in families"*.

However, there is more happening in this discussion that a simple IRE discourse. In the "third move" of the triadic discourse, Wells points out that the teacher can not only evaluate a student's answer, s/he can also take "the opportunity to extend the student's answer, to draw out its significance, or to make connections with other parts of the students' total experience" (wells page 30). Jane makes this third move when she asks, *"Tell me more about that?"* rather than evaluating the student's answer. When Jane asks *"God's love, what does it tell us about God's love?"* she is hoping for a response from a number of students. As Nassaji and Wells point out, such an action "encourages a more dialogic and exploratory stance to the topic under consideration".(p381). In both the monologic and dialogic moments in this discussion, Jane retains control of what happens. While she gives her students the opportunity to explore the idea being discussed by responding to her questions resulting in *"all sorts of answers, and they all have a turn"* she maintains control of the movement of the discussion because there is a direction that she wants it to go. For this reason she has to *"push and push and push"* her students. At the conclusion of the lesson, Jane reverts to a

monologue as she summarises what has been discussed (*"If you go away with one thing today"*).

In sum, in their actions and discussions, it is evident that many of the SRE teachers believe that giving their students the opportunity to ask and answer questions is important. While they encourage their students to engage with the truth in this way, the contingencies of the classroom influence how much they are willing to allow a dialogic discourse to take place. There are times when they are wary of what their classroom teachers will think about their answers to the students' questions. There are also moments when they pull back from their students' questions because of the time constraints of SRE. In addition, there are times when the Teacher Books restrict the movement from a monologic to a dialogic discourse in the lesson. Although these experiences represent challenges to a dialogical discourse, many of the SRE teachers work hard to ensure that they move beyond IRE discourse. They encourage their student to answer questions and open up dialogue in the third move of IRE. Importantly, they are also willing to hear answers that they do not agree with as they encourage their students to engage with the truth they are teaching because as Joshua points out, *"I'm not here to stuff it down your throats".*

7.3.3   Not proselytising

The SRE teachers believe in a truth that they ultimately hope their students will also believe; so that, as Patricia puts it, they will *"end up in* God's *kingdom as a result of [their] teaching".* However, they do not want to *"stuff it down their throats"*(Joshua)*, "make [their] students] become believers"* (Michelle), *"make them disciples"* (John), *"bring the children to a commitment in Jesus"* (Shirley), or *"manipulate"* (Bart) students to make a faith commitment. This is because they understand the context in which they teach. Unlike some religious schools where there is an emphasis on RE that is faith forming and aims to "convince, convert or strengthen commitment" (Lovat, 1989, p. 1), or church RE that often takes a confessional approach with children; SRE teachers understand that SRE is not the place for proseltyism. Instead they choose to teach about their faith in such a way that their students will be able to build *"a good foundation for exploring issues of faith later"* (Pearl); *"know that the bible is the place where [they] can go to find real people with real faith"* (Alicia); *"share stories about Jesus and the values he espoused and lived out and we try to follow"* (Eleanor); and have *"an opportunity to understand what Christianity is about"* (Michelle). Therefore rather than being a faith-forming endeavour, SRE teachers understand

that teaching about their faith must be an educational endeavour. Shirley describes this as *"placing God before the students each week in an ongoing educational role"*.

SRE pedagogy bears both similarities and differences to classroom and RE pedagogy. The SRE teachers' pedagogy is the same as classroom and RE teachers because of its educational nature, but it is different to classroom pedagogy because SRE teachers are teaching about their personal faith. SRE pedagogy is also different to faith-based RE because RE teachers may be able to call their students to commitment whereas SRE teachers cannot. SRE, to use McGrath's (2005) terms, is both "like other learning" because it is taught as an educational activity with learning outcomes, lesson plans and student workbooks; and "unlike other learning" because SRE teachers "place God before their students each week" (Paddison, 2007) and share their personal faith and trust in God with their students. However, rather than being a faith-forming approach, SRE uses a "faith-sharing" approach where SRE teachers may share their own views but not ask their students to commit to them because they are not allowed to proselytise.

The SRE Teacher books that are provided by the SRE Providers support this position; the Connect (Cassis, 2012) and Access (Paddison, 2007) Teacher Books are written from this perspective. Connect Teacher Books describe the teaching and learning in SRE as "first and foremost an educational activity. Its intention is to impart accurate understanding of the nature of Christian faith" (Cassis, 2012, p. 205); and Access Teacher Books state that their approach to SRE is an educational one where SRE teachers "give students information and experience in Christian beliefs and practices as clearly as possible and respect their response to it" (Paddison, 2007, p. 66). This "silent tension" is because although SRE teachers may hope that their students will one day choose to follow the teachings of their faith; they know that within the distinctive legislative context of SRE any attempt to call students to a faith commitment is prohibited. In the conditional hospitality of SRE, the school as host is at home, literally or figuratively; and the SRE teacher as guest is the stranger, incomer or possible trespasser (Langmann, 2011) who is not permitted to proselytise. Although the SRE teachers are welcomed, if not welcome in, schools; this is conditional on their submission to the legislative power of the Departments of Education that they teach under.

The way that the SRE teachers in this study use bible stories, ask and respond to questions, and choose not to proselytise are three examples of how truth and hope are enacted in the SRE classroom. Although they believe in absolute truth, they work with this truth to

make it engaging for their students by making contingent truth moves. They are motivated to do this because of the hope that they have for their students. Their eschatological hope is that their students will engage with the bibles stories, have their questions answered and ultimately respond to the faith message of what they are teaching. Key to this eschatological hope is that their students will not be pressured to make faith choices during SRE. Their immediate hope is grounded in their desire for their lessons to go well because they believe that if their lessons do not go well it is difficult for their students to engage with the truth they are teaching so that someday their eschatological hope is fulfilled.

7.4   Conclusion

The discussion in this chapter provides insight into how SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy. SRE pedagogy is defined as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied. The SRE teachers' epistemological, axiological and methodological experiences and beliefs about truth and hope are woven together to influence their pedagogy.

The SRE teachers' pedagogy is influenced by their epistemology: their belief in an absolute truth that is found in God and the bible. This belief is at the centre of their pedagogy. It determines what they teach and influences how they approach their teaching. This belief is also reflected in the eschatological hope of the SRE teachers. They hope that what they are teaching will make a significant impact on their students' lives in the future. They use the language of seeds from the Parable of the Sower to describe this patient hope.

This belief also influences their axiology. They believe that it is important to cultivate a relationship with God by praying and reading the bible, and that this relationship is on show when they teach. They believe that they are ambassadors for God who represent Him in their classrooms and must behave in a way that reveals the attributes of God to their students. For these SRE teachers, a commonly expressed belief is that their lives are part of their pedagogy because it is here that their students can see what faith looks like.

The SRE teachers' beliefs about God also influence their pedagogical methodology. They are tempted to use a banking approach because of their belief in an absolute truth that they want to pass on to their students. They may be tempted to 'transmit the truth' to maintain control of the lesson to keep within the time constraints or because they want to give their

students something that they value so greatly. However, many of them acknowledge that their students need to unwrap the "truth package" they present, and express joy or excitement when their students' questions take the lesson in unexpected directions.

The SRE teachers' use of bible stories in their teaching binds together truth and hope. The SRE teachers use bible stories to invite their students into the truth in engaging and accessible ways. They have a limited hope that their students will listen, enjoy and discuss these stories; and they have an eschatological hope that ultimately these bible stories will change their way of viewing the world. Although storytelling is usually monologic, the SRE teachers move to a dialogic discourse when they encourage their students to think about the stories at a deep level by asking questions of the stories.

The majority of SRE teachers in this study use a Teacher Book to support their teaching. These books provide interesting and engaging approaches to telling bible stories but do not always provide opportunities for deep engagement with the text. Some of the SRE teachers who are not trained classroom teachers follow the Teacher Books closely. However, the majority of the SRE teachers in this study modify the lessons in the Teacher Books to increase their students' engagement in the lesson.

There is a distinctiveness of SRE pedagogy that is derived from the SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences. Their guest/host relationships, their experiences of vulnerability and belief in God's authority, the importance they place on teaching the truth, and the eschatological hope they have for their students all influence the way they teach that is reflected in their immediate hope and contingent truth. As the SRE teachers describe their teaching it is clear that the relationships they develop both with God and their students is important. This relational teaching, the heart of the SRE teachers' pedagogy will be discussed in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RELATIONAL TEACHING

At the heart of any pedagogy is relationship between a teacher and students that is characterised by a teacher's invitation to learn and the uptake of this by students. In a pedagogic relation SRE teachers intentionally develop relationships with their students that are marked by care, hospitality and mutuality. Rodgers and Raider-Roth capture the essence of *Relational Teaching* when they describe teaching as "engaging in an authentic relationship with students where teachers know and respond with intelligence and compassion to students and their learning" (2006, p. 265). The pedagogic relation, however, has a distinctive quality in SRE teaching because of the conditional nature of teacher-student relationships in SRE where students can choose to not attend SRE lessons. In addition, *Relational Teaching* acknowledges that there are two other relationships that are also important in SRE pedagogy. Firstly, the SRE teachers' relationships with their classroom teachers and other school staff is important because the support and resources they receive are often negotiated through these relationships. Secondly, the SRE teachers' relationship with a God that they believe is relational and that they hope their students will one day be in relationship with also influences their pedagogy.
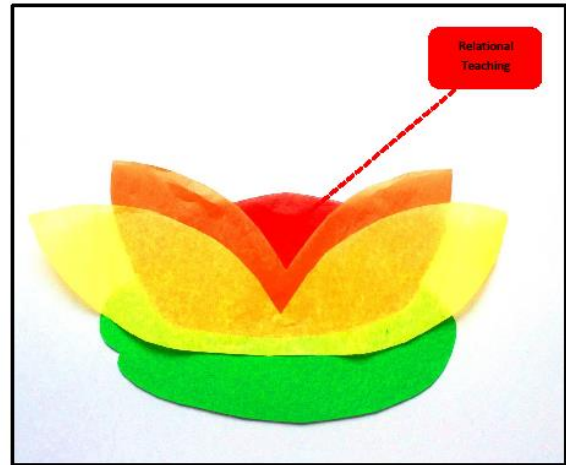
Due to its central important in SRE pedagogy, *Relational Teaching* is placed it at the red centre or heart of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus. This location and colour is chosen because *Relational Teaching* is at the heart of relational teaching because it gives life blood to all aspects of the SRE teachers' pedagogy. The SRE teachers' experiences and beliefs that are reflected in each layer of the lotus are all tempered by their relational teaching. By putting relationships at the centre of their pedagogy, their interest in the child comes to the forefront of their pedagogy and all other experiences are changed. Firstly, the *Guest and Host* layer of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus is modified by relational teaching when the SRE teachers, as mediators of God's welcome, choose to treat their students as welcome guests in the particular context of their teaching. Secondly, the SRE teachers' vulnerability and experience of authority influences, and is influenced by, the relational aspect of their teaching, because it

is often when the SRE teachers try to develop positive relationships with their students by being open and "real" that they are also at their most vulnerable; and the way they use choose to use their authority also influences the relationships they develop with their students. Thirdly, their approach to teaching the truth is tempered by the SRE teachers desire to get to know their students and offer them the hope they have. Relational teaching therefore takes each of the overlapping layers of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus and puts the student at the centre of their pedagogy. This is reminiscent of the overlapping layers of RE pedagogy described by McGrath (2005) where each subsequent approach to pedagogy is influenced by previous layers.

In this study, SRE pedagogy is defined as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning in the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied. It is helpful to view *Relational Teaching* through the three pedagogical lenses because each of the lenses highlights a different aspect of SRE pedagogy: For example, the SRE teachers use a number of strategies to intentionally develop positive relationships with their students both inside and outside the classrooms (methodological lens). The value they place on these relationships reflects an axiological view of pedagogy, and points to their epistemological understanding of God who they believe can be known through a relationship. Like the other aspects of SRE pedagogy, the three lenses of pedagogy do not stand alone but are intricately interwoven in *Relational Teaching*.

Analysis of the data from the SRE teachers' interviews and journals led to the construction of fourteen focused codes relating to relational teaching. The focused codes led to the construction of three categories that all emphasised the place of developing or maintaining relationships with either the students, the classroom teacher or God: (i) engaging and managing the students and the learning environment, (ii) developing relationships with children, (iii) and walking with God, and finally led to the construction of the conceptual category of *Relational Teaching* that brought together these ideas into one concept. Like the other three conceptual categories, data related to this conceptual category has been constructed into an imagined teacher conversation that can be found in Appendix 8.1. In addition, Appendix 8.2 shows the movement from focused codes to conceptual category in the analysis process.

Due to the central position of *Relational Teaching* it is perhaps not surprising that several of the focused codes in *Relational Teaching* are also focused codes in the three other conceptual categories. The focused code of having enough time is in both *Relational Teaching* and *Guest and Host;* being part of the community, being a witness, being used by God, dealing with difficult kids, having enough time, and knowing names are found in both *Relational Teaching* and *Vulnerability and Authority*; and being relational, and developing relationships with children are in both *Relational Teaching* and *Truth and Hope.* This mingling of focused codes reflects the intimate relationship between *Relational Teaching* and the three other conceptual codes in the SRE Pedagogy Lotus. There are, however, aspects of *Relational Teaching* that are unique to the conceptual code: having a relationship with God, praying, seeing God's power, seeing the Holy Spirit working, and walking with God. These focused codes suggest an epistemological view of the SRE teachers' pedagogy because they reflect the intimate relationship the SRE teachers believe they have with God and this influences the kind of relationships they want to develop with their students.

The SRE teachers' interviews signal the value they place in developing positive teacher-student relationships. Looking at their pedagogy through a methodological lens, it is evident that many of the SRE teachers believe that developing a good relationship with their students will help them to establish a positive environment where learning can take place. However, two other significant dimensions of relational teaching also come into play in SRE pedagogy: (i) the SRE teachers do not simply value the developing relationships with their students for the improved educational outcome, but because each student is an individual child that should be met relationally; and (ii) the SRE teachers bring a spiritual dimension to the importance they place on developing good relationships with their students. Their expressed belief that God is relational, their sense of calling to SRE and their desire to share the possibility of having a relationship with God motivates them to work on positive relationships with their students. It is these three dimensions of the SRE teachers' understanding of relational teaching, and the intimate links between *Guest and Host, Truth and Hope,* and *Vulnerability and Authority* that explains why *Relational Teaching* is at the heart of the SRE Pedagogy.

This chapter explores *Relational Teaching* through the themes of intentionality, care, love and I-Thou and I-It relationships. van Manen's (1994, 2006) pedagogic relation is helpful for understanding the intentionality of *Relational Teaching* and Noddings (1984,

1988, 2012) emphasis on caring relationships is a good starting point for a discussion on care. Both the themes of love and I-Thou relationships are discussed with reference to Buber's (1958, 1965) description of I-It and I-Thou relations and Game and Metcalfe's (Game, Marlin, & Metcalfe, 2013; Game & Metcalfe, 2010; Metcalfe & Game, 2004, 2007, 2012) discussion of the place of love and care in teacher-student relationships.

8.1   Intentionality

Many of the SRE teachers describe how they intentionally develop relationships with the students in their classes. Lisa captures this when she says

> *I'm not there to be their friend, I know that. But I want to be a loving teacher to them; I want to be a loving influence in their life.*

Such a pedagogic relation, described by van Manen (2006, p. 75) as an "intentional relationship between an adult and a child in which the adult's dedication and intentions are the child's mature adulthood", occurs when teachers intentionally work to develop a particular kind of relationship with their students where they retain their place as "teacher". Stephen uses almost identical language to Lisa when he acknowledges that "*I'm not their friend, I know that. But I'm there to love them within the boundaries of a teacher/student relationship*". Elissa describes a pedagogic relation when she explains that although she wanted to go into the classroom as the students' peer she realised that *"what they need is a teacher"*. This realisation concurs with Metcalfe and Game (2006, p. 83) who describe teacher-student relationships in terms of "respectful formality that allows teachers and students to be there for each other", and warn that if teachers try to become their students' friends "teaching relationships become expressions of personal preferences".

Relational teaching is incumbent on a pedagogic relation where the teacher is intentional in his/her pursuit of a relationship with a student. This is particularly significant for the SRE teachers who teach in a context where their students are free to choose whether they attend, and where the content of their lessons is driven by their belief in a relational God. Such an intentional relationship "calls upon the mental, physical, emotional and relational resources of the teacher" (Aultman, Williams-Johnson, & Schutz, 2009, p. 266), and can require a "significant amount of emotional labour" (Isenbarger & Zembylas, 2006, p. 120) because at times teachers have to control their negative emotions to present a caring face to their students. For example, Ruby explains that a positive learning environment is created by "*my attitude*". She believes that:

… if you walk in there and you've got the weight of the world on your shoulders the kids can sense you don't want to be there, but if you walk in and are genuinely happy to see the kids, it shows that you care.

However, a pedagogic relation is not a unilateral relationship. Teachers also benefit from the relationships they develop in their classrooms. At a methodological level, relational teaching benefits the teacher because students are more ready to learn and to participate in a classroom where they believe they are cared for (see for example, Noddings, 2012). Using the language of hospitality that connects with Derrida and the *Guest and Host* discussion in Chapter Five, Parker Palmer picks up on the mutual benefit of relational teaching when he says "Good teaching is an act of hospitality toward the young, and hospitality is always also an act that *benefits* the host even more than the guest" (1998, p. 50).

The intentionality of many of the SRE teachers in developing relationships with their students hints at an act of limitless and unconditional hospitality that harks back to Derrida's law of hospitality where "anyone can come at any time and can come in without needing a key for the door" (Derrida, 2000a, p. 14). However, regardless of an SRE teachers' desire to welcome his/her students unconditionally, a condition is placed on the welcome that the SRE teachers can give. SRE teachers may want to welcome all students into the classroom, offer them hospitality and intentionally develop a relationship with them, but students cannot unconditionally cross the threshold. They must have permission from their parents to attend SRE before they can be welcomed by the SRE teachers. In addition, students can choose to stop attending SRE and in effect reject the hospitality of the SRE teacher. In this distinctive context of SRE where the schools do not always offer unconditional hospitality to SRE teachers, and SRE teachers cannot offer unconditional hospitality to the students unless they have permission to attend SRE, the emphasis on relational teaching is important as SRE teachers attempt to create a space where their students will want to continue coming.

Relational teaching is about a pedagogic relation where the teacher unconditionally and intentionally welcomes his/her students. A pedagogic relation benefits both the student and the teacher because there is value simply in being in relation with another person. This may be the "relational significance" that van Manen (1994, pp. 140-141) is referring to in his further exploration of the pedagogic relation:

Teachers always stand in a certain relation to the students they teach. The very term *pedagogy* always brings out the relational quality between teacher and student, in a manner unlike any other educational concepts such as curriculum, instruction, or

teaching. The term *pedagogy* shares with terms such as *friendship*, *love* or *family* that they evoke first of all an implicit relational significance.

This implicit relational significance means that developing positive teacher-student relationships is not primarily about benefiting the SRE teacher because the students are more engaged and more willing to continue attending their classes, or benefiting the student because they learn more. Developing relationships are significant in and of themselves; they are the consequence of the hospitality that is offered and received by teachers and students.

As Eleanor talks about teaching SRE she emphasises the relational aspect of SRE pedagogy over all other aspects of her pedagogy. The following excerpt from her second interview provides a helpful illustration of relational teaching in SRE:

> *I just trust that being a Christian and trying to live faithfully in the way I relate to the children helps them to understand that there are adults out there who care about them, who are patient with them. I think that being a classroom teacher can be a frustrating time, I hear teachers sometimes say things to children and I think 'that must cut', or there are children whenever there is a bit of noise who are pointed to. So I try to be someone who cares about them. I haven't got the same responsibilities as a classroom teacher and the day to day need to keep them on the straight and narrow I can have a bit of fun with them and hand them back, kind of like a grandmother.*

Eleanor reveals intentionality in her relationship with her students as she *"tries to be someone who cares about them" and "lives faithfully in the way I relate to the children"*. She also uses family language to describe her relationship with the students being *like a grandmother.* Although Eleanor criticises the classroom teacher for saying and doing things that she perceives hurts the students, she even expresses a caring perspective towards the classroom teacher when she says that "*I think being a classroom teacher can be a frustrating time; I haven't got the same responsibilities as a classroom teacher".* Finally, her opportunity to *"have a bit of fun with them"* indicates the mutuality of the relationship she has with her students.

Many of the SRE teachers express the desire to establish a positive classroom where their students enjoy SRE. While they may be unaware of the literature supporting their belief, it is widely understood that teacher-student relationships are important for learning. Research on teacher-student relationships highlights the connection between positive relationships and students' success (for example, Davis, 2010; Hamre & Pianta, 2001; Noddings, 1988, 2003, 2005, 2012; Wentzel, 2003). For example, in their review of the literature on the influence of positive teacher-student relationships Aultman et al. (2009) found that teacher-student

relationships are important for student motivation, intellectual development and achievement, supportive classroom environments and engaged learning. Similarly, in their literature review, Goldstein and Lake (2003) connected teacher-student relationships with improved academic achievement, safer school environments, increased prosocial behaviour and improved problem solving. Rodgers and Raider-Roth (2006, p. 266) conclude that "the quality of these [teacher-student] relationships is not a frill or "feel-good" aspect of schooling, it is an essential feature of learning".

However, the SRE teachers' emphasis on *Relational Teaching* is not only due to their desire to help their students learn. It is also important to them because of the particular context of SRE. They care about developing relationships with their students because their students can choose not to attend their lessons and because they believe that teaching and learning about faith happens within relationships. This distinctive aspect of SRE means that a positive relationship between an SRE teacher and his/her students may be the determining factor for whether a student continues to attend SRE, therefore raising the status of developing relationships beyond what it might be for a classroom teacher. For some of the SRE teachers this puts an added pressure on them to create a hospitable, positive environment so that their students will continue to want to attend SRE. Using language that resonates with hospitality, Ruby explains that because of this choice she wants to ensure that her students are "*having [such] a good time they will want to come [back] and bring their friends"*. Renee also emphasises the importance of the SRE teacher *"enjoying"* SRE to enhance the connection with her students, and taking time to develop relationships:

> *[An SRE teacher should] enjoy it. And enjoy the children. It's OK not to teach everything that you've got in your hand. Sometimes as Christians the best way to teach them is to love them. Don't feel like you have to rush the class.*

Several of the SRE teachers express the belief that developing positive relationships with their students will help them in all aspects of their teaching. They connect developing good relationships with classroom management, spending one-on-one time with certain students, creating environments where relationships can flourish, and caring about their students. These aspects of establishing a positive learning environment are important to the SRE teachers because they believe this will result in their students both learning more and wanting to continue attending SRE lessons. Nerida, an experienced classroom teacher, emphasises that taking time to develop good relationships with her students is essential for

effective learning. She expresses the belief that if she has a good relationship with her students they will be *"behaviourally engaged"* and not *"have a run around lesson where they can do what they like"*. In this way, she connects classroom management with taking the time to develop positive relationships with her students. She is therefore willing to commit a substantial portion of her lesson time at the beginning of a year to developing these relationships. Nerida explains that:

> *Classroom management makes a huge difference to the kids' attitude to SRE, if it's a mockery or not. Like anything if they can't hear what's going on and the teacher spends the entire time trying to get their attention then you are not going to get any content out, so getting to know the kids and having the same group of kids, and in the first few lesson working with the kids really hard. You might not get through very much in the first five or ten lessons with them, but working to get the trust with them where they will respect you and listen … is so important.*

In addition to the role of hospitality in *Relational Teaching*, an SRE teachers' experience of vulnerability and authority also comes into play. Jane's approach when she was bullied by one of her students illustrates how working on developing these relationships increases her vulnerability. With the assistance of the SRE teacher helper in her classroom Jane allocated time during the lessons to spend one-on-one time with the student who was bullying her. These individual times gave Jane the opportunity for "*building that relationship with her over time*" in the hope that this would help what was happening in the classroom. Signalling her understanding of her role in developing a positive relationship with her students, Jane spoke to her classroom teacher about the student who was bullying her. In an act of vulnerability, she explained to the classroom teacher that "*If it's a [personality] clash I'm happy to change [classes]".*When the classroom teacher explained that the student had problems, Jane committed to continuing with the student and working on their relationship.

The SRE teachers want to unconditionally develop positive relationships with their students. In acts of unconditional hospitality, they welcome all students to their class, but their welcome does have conditions attached. They conditionally welcome their students across the threshold into the classroom when they use their authority to determine how their students will behave. Bernstein (2000, 2003) and Bernstein and Solomon's (1999) two aspects of the pedagogic discourse are helpful here: (i) the regulative discourse reflects expectations about social order, and (ii) the instructional discourse determines what knowledge is transmitted to the students. For example, both Nerida and John explain that they control the way their students enter the classroom (the regulative discourse). Nerida explains

that wherever possible she *"insists that they line up and come in quietly… [so that] they know they are coming into a settled place"*. The conditional welcome that SRE teachers offer to their students continues as they determine the direction of the lesson, the questions that are asked and the answers that are acceptable (the instructional discourse).

However, it is interesting to note that Noblit, Rogers, and McCadden (1995) seem to be elevating the importance of developing positive teacher-student relationships over the pedagogic discourse when they advance the relational aspect of teaching over a teacher's knowledge of subject matter or use of teaching strategies. Building a regulative environment that is centred on positive relationships with students is key for an SRE teacher who is there for a short time only and in a school that does not employ him/her. Noblit et al. (1995) conclude that without a relational connection between a teacher and his/her students

> ... a teacher may have the subject-matter knowledge and the technical ability to teach, but the opportunities for real learning will be scarce, because what the teacher does not have is the student. Caring fosters this teacher-student connection and encourages possibilities for learning that may not otherwise occur (p. 684)

Bart captures this idea when he states that *"you could be the most skilled up person in the world, but [it means nothing] if you can't deal relationally"*. This is also what Jane is getting at when she says:

> SRE *is not just a job, doing a lesson and coming out again. I care for the kids and I want them to know about Jesus. I fundamentally believe that building a relationship with the kids and any difficult children is also going to help delivering the lesson."*

Although Bart, Jane, and other SRE teachers may be elevating relationship over subject matter or teaching strategies, they do not lose sight of the content. The SRE teachers choose to teach SRE because they believe that the content of what they are teaching is important. Some of them such as Nerida and Ruby go so far as to suggest it is more important than anything else their students will learn at school. Because it is so important to them, there are times when they seem to forget the importance they place on relationships as they move towards a monologic discourse (as discussed in Chapter Seven) so that they can get as much of the truth out as possible in their limited time. But relational teaching emphasises relationships with the students over the transmission of truth (the instructional discourse). It acknowledges that without good relationships, the most well-constructed lessons will potentially fall on deaf ears. Groome, a researcher in religious education pedagogy (1988, p.

17) expresses this when he says that religious educators have a responsibility to provide a teaching/learning environment that

> invites the participants to grapple with and question their faith, that enables people to come to see for themselves what their religious tradition means for their lives… Such intellectual hospitality also requires our openness to be called in question by our co-learners and to learn from them.

Relational Teaching helps to create such a teaching/learning environment and therefore assuages the potential monologic emphasis on truth as the 'received word' that must be assimilated by the students. It involves "intellectual hospitality" that allows for differing opinions and personal openness that comes from being in relationship with one another.

Offering intellectual hospitality can create a mutuality where the SRE teachers experience being both teacher and learner. Nicole describes this experience when she says:

> *I find that as I am teaching I am learning as well. Each time year after year that I teach the lessons I find something new that I learn. One is the result of the other... Sometimes the kids are like the teacher… [when they] bring [in] things from their own background or churches.*

At these moments of mutuality and hospitality, *Relational Teaching* is at its most powerful. Metcalfe and Game (2007, p. 52) describe this in terms of a "classroom spirit" coming from the children and teacher at that moment:

> The hum of the classroom involves everyone, yet is beyond the control of even the teacher: Something *happens* without anyone making it happen. This is an understanding of spirituality that places it within the ordinary world, for the classroom spirit comes from these children and this teacher at this moment.

These are the kind of moments that Pearl captures when she describes being able to *"hear a pin drop"* when the students are engaged in a story she is telling and after the story when there is a *buzz of enthusiasm"* from the students. Or when Patricia describes a time when she read the Easter story from the bible and the students were *"entirely engrossed the whole way through, at the end there were hands going up everywhere".* For the SRE teachers, the spirituality that Metcalfe and Game describe is ascribed to the work of God in the classroom. For example, Beth attributes these moments to God *"making His presence felt in the room because of a combination of things that have come together right".*

Although "something happens", it is aided by SRE teachers making a relational connection with their students. They do this in a variety of ways. Bart believes it is important

to *"be able to have a joke"* so that the students can *"see that you are human, that's part of the sharing of you"*. Elissa emphasises the importance of making relational connections through having fun with her students. In the following description of her kindergarten class, Elissa compares the emotional labour of teaching her difficult year six class to the fun of teaching kindergarten and promotes having a good time above understanding the material she is teaching:

> *The [difficult year 6] class would end and I would be so exhausted. And I'd leave and [think] 'wow, I'm so glad that I have a whole week before I have to go back'. But in Kindy it was fun, and it was good and they loved me coming and they always were up out of their chairs and coming up and giving me a hug and they didn't want me to go and they were just such a fun group of kids. And they liked me there and even if the lesson wasn't the best, they'd still want me there the next week and they'd still want to hug me and say hello. They'd play silly games and try to hide from me but that's all good fun. So even if they didn't grasp what I was trying to teach them I knew they had had a good time.*

Stephen picks up on relational connection when he describes another SRE teacher who influences his teaching:

> *He was such an out there extrovert guy and the kids just loved him. He wasn't a great guitarist but he had a guitar and he knew a few songs and they were songs the kids loved. He did some crazy things, once a siren went past and he just yelled out 'here I am' and the kids just laughed their heads off.*

Daniel emphasises the importance of winning the students' respect for developing positive relationships with his students. He does this by *"being honest, answering all their questions, remembering their names and keeping our promises."* Many of the SRE teachers also talk about the importance of remembering their students' names in relational teaching. However, they recognise the challenge of this when they are with their students for such a short time each week.

Metcalfe and Game (2007, p. 53) point out that teachers "have a crucial role in establishing the conditions within which relationships can flourish" in the classroom. They identify how routines and rituals help teachers to establish a "trustworthy environment" (p. 54). John creates a trustworthy environment by having a *"very, very set structure"*:

> *They come in, they sit in the circle, they might have a discussion that raises the issue, then we do the Lord's Prayer, then we go around the circle each one having the*

chance to pray, then we do a story, then we do an activity and then we finish with the Grace[45].

The Lords' Prayer and the Grace are two examples of ritual that occur in John's lessons. Several other SRE teachers also include prayer in their lessons. These prayers help to establish a positive learning environment because they are rituals that help teachers establish a trustworthy environment. They are also a means of developing relationships with the students. Pearl describes how she encourages her students to be involved in the prayers.

> *Some years I've had a kid who wants to pray, so I say 'you start the prayer and I'll finish it off'. I encourage the kids to pray in their heads. But I'm conscious that I don't want to put words into their mouths. We've also talked about what Amen means. Amen is the way to finish a prayer, it also means I agree. So I tell them 'listen and if you agree with what is said, at the end you can say Amen'.*

It is clear from this discussion that the SRE teachers acknowledge the importance of taking the time to develop good relationships with their students. They want to do this so that their students will be engaged with the lessons and so that they will want to keep on attending SRE. The relational nature of SRE motivates the SRE teachers to spend the time developing relationships with their students by making their lessons fun, remembering their students' names, and sharing stories of their own lives. The ritual of prayer also plays a role in creating a positive learning environment. The pedagogic relation is evident when SRE teachers like Jane put the relational needs of their students ahead of their own needs. However, relational teaching is not only about establishing a positive learning environment to foster learning, it is also about treating students as individuals.

8.2   Caring

Axiology addresses the question, 'what is of value?' and emphasises the things that teachers' value and bring into their classrooms. Reflecting an axiological view of pedagogy, the SRE teachers place a high value on the relationships they develop with their students. Developing teacher-student relationships and caring often walk hand in hand in the literature, and cannot be discussed without reference to Nel Noddings who has been at the forefront of caring research. Noddings (1988) explains that caring happens within relationships where one is a "carer" and the other is the "cared-for". In an educational setting the teacher usually takes the role of carer and the student takes the role of the cared-for. She believes that students

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[45] The Grace is the last verse in 2 Corinthians that is often said as a communal prayer.

need and want teachers to care for them as people and "to convey this care through listening and responding to their expressions of concern" (Noddings, 2005, p. 147). This is similar to van Manen's notion of the pedagogic relation where the teacher intentionally "stands in a caring relation to children" (van Manen, 2006, p. 75) and to Metcalfe and Game's (2006, p. 44) statement that "care is not a supplement to the teacher's pedagogic responsibilities, but intrinsic to them".

Many of the SRE teachers reflect in the interviews on how they think their students would describe them. These reflections provide insight to the importance they place on caring for their students. In these reflections, many of the SRE teachers believe that their students either see them as caring and accepting, or see their love of God through the way they act in the classroom. Most of their musings are steeped in relational language. For example, Mary, Joshua, Eleanor, Jane, and Patricia refer to caring as they think about what their students would say about them. Mary hopes that her students will remember her as a *"kind and caring old lady"*. Joshua hopes that his students would describe him as a *"caring person telling a good story",* Eleanor wants to be described as *"someone who loves and cares for them",* and Patricia *"want[s] them to say that I listen to them and that I care about what they have to say".* Jane connects caring with answering questions when she says

> *I think I'd like them to say I've got a teacher who cares about me. That's general, I'd love them to say I had a teacher who said my question wasn't wrong, was caring.*

Noddings and van Manen both emphasise the role of listening in developing relationships with students. Palmer describes educational hospitality as the place where teachers treat their students with compassion and care, inviting them into dialogue where they can listen and be listened to because "A good host is not merely polite to the guest – the good host assumes that the guest has stories to tell" (Palmer, 1998, p. 79). Similarly, several of the SRE teachers describe how they show they care for the students by listening to them. Although Ruby has limited time in her classroom, she hospitably starts the lesson by having:

> *… either a news slot or an interview slot, so actually hearing from them, choosing one, two or three to hear what's going on in their lives, so it's not just them hearing from me but they know it's a relationship… I care whether it's their birthday or their dog died.*

Eleanor also emphasises listening to her students in developing relationships with them.

What I'd really like is time to spend one on one with children and listen to them. Not in front of the whole class, but to listen to them as people. I rarely get that opportunity. I used to have classes over recess, and I'd go out into the playground and children would come up to me and chat. Not all deep and meaningful just to come up and relate. Children like to relate and tell their story.

Like Eleanor, Ruby also shows her care by listening to her students outside the classroom when she

... walks through the playground at lunchtime and says hello, [asking] what they had for lunch, what games are you playing. It shows that you care.

When Patricia identifies *"caring about students and listening to what they say"* as more important than being *"really interesting [or] telling them about new things"* she emphasis *Relational Teaching* over the Bernstein's instructional discourse. However, she does not ignore the place of the instructional discourse; it is more that she believes the instructional discourse is embedded in relational teaching. This is evident when she explains that

… potentially the thing that makes them more inclined to investigate Christianity is that the person who taught them SRE genuinely wanted to hear what they wanted to say.

Ruby also describes how she wants to discipline her students "*in love and caring*" rather than "*actually getting angry at a child and not wanting them to be there*". She paints a picture of the emotional labour of teaching when she says "*I wish there was a way that classroom control was easier and didn't take so much of an emotional toll on myself*". Beth also alludes to the emotional labour of relational teaching when she says of a difficult class that she teaches:

I can't see how I can help them understand about God and Jesus and loving one another or being kind and forgiving if I'm glad to get out of the room.

For Beth, managing the students in a difficult class requires the love, forgiveness and kindness that she believes God has offered her. This relational teaching takes intentionality and emotional labour.

Perhaps the notion of emotional labour is what Noddings (1984) is getting at when she distinguishes between natural and ethical caring. Natural caring is effortless because it is driven by an attraction between two people; in contrast, ethical caring does not come naturally, but is motivated by love even when love is not felt. Ethical caring compels someone to "respond to the initial impulse [to do something for another] with an act of

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commitment" (p. 80). Ethical caring therefore requires an intentional act by the teacher. Noddings (1988) argues that an ethic of care should be at the heart of education (1988) but it is "not a form of agapism. There is no command to love nor, indeed any God to make the commandment" (1984, pp. 28-29). This distinction is helpful because it is a reminder that although Noddings is a good place to start in a discussion of relational teaching it is important to look further to understand relational teaching in SRE. Noddings acknowledges a similarity between her ethic of caring and Christian ethics, but states that "there will be major and irreconcilable differences" (p. 28). Her denial of God's role in relational teaching provides a new direction for understanding relational teaching; that of agapism.

8.3 Love

Gregory (2002) describes three types of love described in Christian thought: eros, "love as passionate yearning" (Halpin, 2009, p. 92); philia, the love shared by friends, and agape. Gregory rejects both eros and philia for relational teaching, and echoes Lisa, Elissa and Stephen's acknowledgement that they are not their students' friends, and van Manen's pedagogic relation when he says "Students are not our friends – they are not our equals in the way our friends are – for students are our charges, our responsibility" (p.16). For Gregory, agape is the love t hat "can guide teachers towards consistently productive relations with students" (p.16) because it provides a "charitable notion of love, one which is freely given to all, irrespective of their evident failings and inadequacies, and the necessity of receiving anything in return" (Halpin, 2009, p. 92). This seems to be the kind of love described by Metcalfe and Game (2004, p. 359) when they state that:

> I do not love someone because of who they are: because of their total set of attributes. I love them *just because,* regardless of who they are… Love is never exclusive but always infinitely exclusive.

I have chosen agape to describe the caring nature of relational teaching to distinguish the SRE teachers' relational teaching from Noddings' care ethic. I believe this is appropriate because in contrast to Noddings' denial of God's commandment to love, these SRE teachers are motivated by the love they believe they have received from God. This love calls them to intentionally develop relationships with their students and to imitate the love they believe that God has shown them. As Halpin (p. 93) points out agape is a

> rendering of love, according to which a person's love of God is realised in his [sic] love for God's creation – chiefly for other people, and without distinction or

discrimination between them… agape possesses the features of unselfishness, equality, creativity and stability.

This love for the "other" is underscored by Christian theologian, Tillich[46] (1955, p. 48) when he states that agape "seeks the person, the *other* one who cannot be exchanged for anything or anyone else". Relational connections can occur when a teacher makes a commitment to the student, and shifts his/her focus from self to the student "other" where a teacher "looks at each student in each situation in a special way" (Owens & Ennis, 2012, p. 395). For example, Nicole sees the "*hungry little hearts that need to know they are special and they are loved*"; Eleanor describes how when she visits people in prison:

> *I hear the sorts of things that happen to families through the stresses of unemployment, drugs and that gives me empathy for this sea of faces [in SRE] that you don't know what's going on behind the scenes.*

This kind of caring where teachers relate to their students in a special way because "of their tender vulnerability, their nothingness" (Metcalfe & Game, 2004, p. 359) is also how Julia sees some of the students she teaches.

> *You know [they] have awful lives. They come in like little orphan Annies. This little girl who comes wears these boots that are too big for her, and she's got these big boots on these little legs. Her parents haven't bought her shoes that fit. So a softness and a sense of not being judgemental and there's kids who can't read and you don't want to make them feel bad.*

Julia cannot help but experience "*a softness and a sense of not being judgmental*" as she teaches the little girl with big boots. She makes choices that van Manen (1994, p. 140) describes as "distinguish[ing] instantly and yet thoughtfully what is appropriate from what is less appropriate, what is good from what is not good in their interactions with children." It is not surprising that the SRE teachers care for their students in this "special way". Like their students, the SRE teachers experience being the other. They are the other in the schools where they teach; outsiders crossing the threshold who appreciate when they are welcomed. They also believe that they are recipients of God's agape love and want to share that with their students.

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[46] A Christian existentialist philosopher and theologian of the twentieth century.

8.4 The I-Thou

Agape and relational teaching are like the I-Thou relations described by Martin Buber (1958). Buber distinguishes between I-Thou and I-It relations. I-Thou relations are direct, open and mutual. They are "an intimate, caring relation which accepts another person" (Charme, 1977, p. 162) regardless of who s/he is. Patricia beautifully captures the mutuality of an I-Thou relationship when she says *"I love participating with the kids and find it a real joy to be in the classroom".* In contrast I-It relations are "finite and bounded, a thing, defined by a border between self and other, subject and object"(Metcalfe & Game, 2013, p. 176). This is not to say that the I-It and I-Thou relations are mutually exclusive. Game and Metcalfe point out that Buber is "alluding to the mutually implicated quality of the I-Thou and the I-It rather than their binary oppositionality" (Metcalfe & Game, 2012, p. 354). In reality, an I-Thou relation requires "a certain knowledge" (Charme, 1977, p. 163) about the I-It relation. Wodehouse (1945, p. 27) helpfully concludes that

> … the I-It and the I-Thou are not incompatibles, but may exist, and should exist together; and may exist simultaneously even with regard to the same thing… the I-It "word" is not deprecatory or privative, but stands for a positive connection of surfaces which may and should work side by side with relation in the depths.

For the SRE teachers the fact that the I-It and the I-Thou exist in relationship to each other is very important. It acknowledges that SRE teachers will relate to a student in his/her classroom as both an object and a subject. When they are more concerned with the regulative discourse they most likely see their students in terms of an I-It relationship. However, their motivation is to manage what is happening in their classroom so that they can develop relationships with their students (I-Thou). There may also be times when developing relationships with their students is not done through an I-Thou relation but through an I-It relation because the SRE teachers are simply working on these relationships to enhance their regulation of what is happening in their classrooms.

However, SRE teachers' care for their students should compel them to develop I-Thou relations with them. When SRE teachers have an I-Thou relationship with their students they acknowledge that their students are different to them and "accept who I thus see, so that in full earnestness I can direct what I say to him as the person he is" (Buber, 1958, p. 11). Joshua's description of getting beside a quiet boy in his class captures this intimate, caring relation:

He was working [in his Student Book] and I went and had a talk to him and I said something about a father and he said 'I didn't have a father' and I said 'I understand that because I didn't have a father either' and of course we struck a bond there.

In I-Thou teacher-student relationships the teacher sees students as people that they do something *with* and not as objects that they do something *to.* This is captured beautifully by Shirley when she explains her decision to slow down and teach a lesson over two weeks:

You can relax, you can actually look at the children as real people, not just objects of your teaching and find out more where they're at. By taking the time constraint away, instead of teaching SRE you are teaching children. And it becomes far less didactic. You can interact.

When Shirley removes the time constraint imposed upon her by the Teacher Books she is able to see her students as *"real people, not just objects"* she sees them in an I-Thou relation as well as an I-It relation and her emphasis becomes the student rather than the subject she is teaching. Stephen describes how he believes it is important to *"nurse our curriculum"* so that he can slow down and spend time getting to know his students, *"So that hopefully over time they will see that we do care about them and what happens in their lives",* but he does not lose sight of the I-It relation when he does this.

Eleanor acknowledges the challenge of the time constraint of thirty minutes and relational teaching when she describes herself as "*bursting into the room"* where she does not "*have the opportunity for forming long, in depth relationships with the children".* Nerida compares the relationship she developed with the students when she was a classroom teacher to the relationship she has as an SRE teacher and concludes that it is "*much more distant than a classroom teacher. So on a relational level it's just so different".* However, she also explains that it is a

… really weird situation to be in. But although you're only coming in for such a short time each week you do develop a relationship because of the nature of what you are teaching. You immediately step into something that is really intimate.

Specifically referring to religious education, Groome (1994)[47] also highlights the importance of teachers caring for their students in I-Thou relations. Elsewhere he insists that teachers must "bring a deep passion and caring for the well-being of those we would presume

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[47] Groome (1994) developed *Shared Christian Praxis* where students are encouraged to share in a dialogue of critical reflection on Christianity to enable to them to encounter Jesus. This approach is used in the *Walking with Jesus* teaching resources. He writes and lectures on religious education.

to educate" (1988, p. 15). Groome emphasises that students should be treated as subjects who are "co-learners with us on their spiritual journey" (p. 15) rather than objects to be formed into good Christians. Treating students as subjects is exemplified by Joshua when he talks to them at the end of year six about their beliefs about God and explains that they are free to believe or not believe. Eleanor also emphasises that she cannot treat her students as objects, and it is therefore not acceptable to say:

> *'look you need to believe in Jesus, 1 2 3 here you go'. We can just share stories about Jesus and the values He espoused and lived out and we try to follow. And hopefully some of that spark will start to catch.*

Intentionally caring for their students is integral to the SRE teachers' pedagogy. While the SRE teachers believe that relational teaching will help them to create a positive learning environment this is not solely what motivates their desire to develop relationships with their students. Relational teaching is about developing mutual and intentional relationships with the students they teach that emphasise I-Thou rather than an I-It relations. These relationships are developed when the SRE teachers slow down and listen to their students both inside and outside the classroom. Relational teaching means that SRE teachers intentionally pursue a relationship with their students. These relationships are founded on where the SRE teachers view each of their students as individuals deserving of love and care. When the SRE teachers see their students in this light, their student are no longer a class group, but a group of individuals each with experiences and feelings that make up the class they teach. While the aspect of SRE pedagogy that endorses establishing a positive learning environment and caring about the individual students may be similar to classroom pedagogy, the final aspect of relational teaching – belief in a relational God - is distinctive to SRE and RE teaching[48].

8.5   Belief in a relational God

The SRE teachers express the belief that God is the source of truth and that anyone can have a relationship with Him. As has been previously discussed this relational understanding of God influences their pedagogy. The SRE teachers believe that their relationship with God is on show for their students and believe that they are ambassadors for God. The way the SRE teachers relate to their students is therefore very important to them

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[48] It is possible that Christians who are classroom teachers may also incorporate their belief in a relational God into their pedagogy, although it will not result in telling their students about their faith.

because it is a witness to the nature of God, the truth about Him that they want to teach, and the kind of relationship that an individual can have with God. The SRE teachers also believe that God is with them when they prepare and teach their lessons and that they must work on their relationship with Him to ensure He is with them as they teach. *Relational Teaching* draws on these beliefs and motivates the SRE teachers to be open with their students about their relationship with God, and guide their students in understanding how this relationship is practically expressed.

Relational Teaching describes a pedagogy that is both about the relationship SRE teachers have with their students and the relationship they have with their God. They believe that they cannot have one without the other. Jane makes this clear in the following quote where she connects the quality of the relationship that she has with God with the quality of the relationship she can have with the students. Like Noblit et al. (1995) who emphasise the relational aspect of teaching over a teacher's knowledge of subject matter or use of teaching strategies, Jane identifies this relationship as more important than being *"a great teacher"*:

> *The ethos of our Christian faith, how we are relationally will also depend upon our own relationship with God and Jesus. The more relational we are with God and Jesus… surely the more of that we pass on to our students. Surely isn't that what we want to pass on to our kids, rather than just bible stories. To be relational with the kids we're actually acting out, we're leaving them with something. I might not be a great teacher; I don't have the foundation of great teaching. But as Christians we are relational and we want to be relational with the kids.*

All teachers do more than pass on a body of knowledge, they "embody what is taught in a personal way" (van Manen, 2006, p. 75). As SRE teachers develop positive relationships with the students in their care, they embody the love of a relational God who Jane believes *"knows and loves and cares for them so much that He knows the number of hairs on their heads"*. Nerida's comment that in SRE *"you immediately step into something that is really intimate"* helps to explicate a significant difference between SRE teaching and classroom teaching. There is something about the subject being taught that changes what happens in the classroom. This difference is that SRE teachers don't just want their students to know *about* God in a temporal relationship, they also hope that they will *know* God in a spiritual relationship. There is an interesting harmony at play between three relationships: (i) the temporal relationship that exists between the SRE teachers and their students; (ii) the spiritual relationship that exists between the SRE teachers and God; and (iii) their belief that this

spiritual relationship is important for helping their students to understand what God is like so that they may want the same relationship in the future.

Nicole identifies both the temporal and spiritual aspects of her teaching and relationship with God when she says:

> *We are actually telling them about this God and showing them that you have a relationship with Him. And [we are] allowing them to bring these two things together in their own time.*

Her desire for her students to bring the two things together shows her belief in the need for both a temporal and spiritual relationship with God. That is, the students need to have an understanding of who God is and what He has done (a temporal relationship) before they can "have a [spiritual] relationship with Him". This intersection between temporal and spiritual is also evident in the following excerpt from Ruby's interview. There are also glimpses of her epistemological, axiological and methodological pedagogy. What she believes about teaching SRE is grounded in her understanding of God (her epistemology), this influences the values she brings to her teaching (her axiology), and finally it influences her methodology because she believes that only people of faith can teach SRE (her methodology) Ruby distinguishes between teaching *"the facts about Christianity"* and teaching "*about a relationship"*:

> *You could have someone in and just teach the facts about Christianity, that's what [General] religious education is like. [But] SRE is different and you need Christians teaching it otherwise it just becomes about content and not about a relationship with God. Changing the theoretical into the relationship is what you want.*

In sum, the SRE teachers' belief in a relational God is a distinctive aspect of *Relational Teaching* that sets SRE pedagogy apart from classroom pedagogy while associating it with RE pedagogy. The key to this distinctiveness is the nature of SRE. As was pointed out in Chapter One, SRE is education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion. That is, SRE, like RE, is taught by people with faith in God who can share their faith with their students. However, unlike RE, SRE teachers cannot call their students to make a commitment to the faith. In contrast, classroom teachers in public school cannot share their religious faith with their students. Even in GRE where students are taught about the world's major religions, what people believe and how that belief affects their lives as part of their study of humanities and social science, the classroom teacher's religious belief or otherwise is irrelevant. In this aspect of *Relational Teaching*, the SRE teachers' belief in a God who is relational comes to

the forefront. The SRE teachers want their students to both know *about* and *know* God. The SRE teachers believe that the way that they relate to their students helps their students to understand who God is and what He is like. Developing positive relationships with their students is therefore important not just because it helps establish a positive classroom environment or because the SRE teachers care for their students, but also because it helps their students to *know* God. The SRE teachers also express the belief that when they develop their own relationship with God they help their students to know God because their students can see that this relationship is real and meaningful to them. The SRE teachers' belief in a relational God is therefore a significant aspect of SRE pedagogy because it changes the kind of relationships the SRE teachers have with their students. They want to have positive relationships that exemplify what a positive relationship with God looks like. *Relational Teaching* is therefore distinctive to SRE pedagogy because it involves SRE teachers embodying and witnessing to God's relational nature to enable their students to more fully understand what they are trying to teach about God.

8.6   Conclusion

This chapter has explored the SRE teachers' experiences and beliefs about *Relational Teaching*. *Relational Teaching* describes how SRE teachers intentionally develop relationships with their students that are marked by care, hospitality and mutuality. The SRE teachers' relationships with their students and their God are at the heart of SRE pedagogy and influence the other three layers of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus. In this study SRE pedagogy is defined as the embodiment of a teacher's beliefs and experiences that are drawn from many sources and used by a teacher to contribute to student learning of the beliefs and tenets of the religion being studied. Viewing the SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences in *Relational Teaching* through the epistemological, axiological and methodological lenses of pedagogy helps to capture a broad understanding of their pedagogy. Developing relationships with their students that are intentional, caring, based on love, and are both I-It and I-Thou relations is important to SRE teachers. This is because they believe these positive relationships help to create a classroom environment where their students will learn, because they care about each individual student, and because they believe in the truth revealed by this relational God.

The thinking of a number of theorists including van Manen, Derrida, Noddings, Palmer, Buber, and Metcalfe and Game is helpful for understanding *Relational Teaching*. All these theorists are writing about a broader view of classroom teaching than SRE teaching. As

previously discussed in Chapter Two there are many similarities between classroom and SRE pedagogy. The significant difference between the beliefs that classroom teachers and SRE teachers hold about *Relational Teaching* is the added dimension of SRE (and RE) teachers' belief in a relational God that they are hoping to reveal to their students[49]. In addition, the SRE teachers' experience of being a guest in the schools and classrooms where they teach, and the students' right to choose whether they attend SRE, also influence the importance they place in developing relationships with their students.

van Manen's pedagogic relation is helpful for describing the intentional caring relationship between SRE teachers and their students. SRE teachers intentionally develop relationships with their students where they retain their place as "teacher" in the classroom. In Noddings' language, the students are the "cared-for" and the teachers are the "carers". The intentionality of pedagogic relations is evident when Metcalfe and game emphasise the crucial role that teachers play in creating the conditions where good relationships flourish. In these caring relationships, teachers take the time to care for their students as individuals by listening and responding to them. These relationships reflect both the I-It and I-Thou relations described by Buber and further explicated by Metcalfe and Game.

Derrida's law and laws of hospitality is also helpful for understanding *Relational Teaching*. The SRE teachers would like to welcome students unconditionally to their classes as they develop relationships with them. However, this is limited by (i) the conditional nature of the hospitality that the schools and legislation affords them; and (ii) by their desire to create a certain learning environment by putting conditions on the behaviour of their students as they cross the threshold. Perhaps the most significant aspect of the SRE teachers' hospitality in *Relational Teaching* is that their students have the right to opt out of their lessons. It is therefore important that the SRE teachers' welcome is caring and hospitable, and that positive relationships are developed so that their students will choose to continue attending.

The SRE teachers often talk about the strategies and methods they use in the classroom; this methodological view of pedagogy is evident in their discussions about establishing a positive learning environment. Many of the SRE teachers believe that

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[49] It is important to note that this belief in a relational God may influence the pedagogy of theistic classroom teachers as well.

developing positive relationships with their students is an integral component of teaching SRE. They believe that a classroom environment that is relational helps their students to learn and to enjoy coming to SRE. They also believe that classrooms where student behaviour is well managed increase opportunities for their students to learn. They connect good behaviour management with positive teacher-student relationships and therefore taking time to get to know their students at the beginning of the school year is part of their methodology. The SRE teachers are motivated to teach their students because of the subject content they are sharing and believe that being open about their own faith helps their students to understand about faith. This intellectual hospitality of being open about their faith and being open to hear what their students think also enhances the relationships they have with their students.

Many of the SRE teachers place a high value on caring for their students that is often expressed through listening. This educational hospitality of listening occurs both inside and outside of the classroom. Due to the high value many of the SRE teachers place on caring for their students because of their belief that God is caring and relational, *Relational Teaching* involves emotional labour. This is because teaching SRE can be challenging and there are times when it takes effort by the SRE teacher to be caring, loving and forgiving. Emotional labour suggests an intentional and deliberate act by the SRE teachers regardless of their students' responses. The SRE teachers develop relationships that are based on agapism, a love for the other that is freely given to all without expecting anything in return because this is the love they believe they have received from God. Buber's I-It and I-Thou relations provide insight into the relationships that the SRE teachers develop with their students. These two relations exist in concert where teachers relate to their students as both object and subject – students to be taught and students to be cared for and valued for who they are.

The influence of the SRE teachers' epistemology is where SRE pedagogy most obviously diverges from classroom teaching. The SRE teachers believe that they know God through having a relationship with Him, God is not a distant other, but close by. It is this relational aspect of God that the SRE teachers want to help their students to understand. They believe that their relationship with God is on view for the students and that the way they relate to their students reflects the relationship they have with their God. Therefore *Relational Teaching* must reflect both relationships for their students to understand who God is. Their relational actions in the classroom are motivated by the ambassadorial status the SRE teachers believe they have in the classroom. They are the representatives of God's love and

therefore must be loving and caring with their students. There is a sense that the SRE teachers believe that the students must first have an I-Thou relationship with them before they can have a spiritual relationship with God.

The beliefs and experiences of SRE teachers strongly influence their pedagogy. They believe in a God that is relational and therefore choose to be relational in the way they teach their students. They believe that students learn better when they have a positive relationship with their teacher and spend the time developing these relationships. The pedagogic relation they pursue with their students is a teacher-student relationship where they unconditionally and intentionally welcome their students. Although the SRE teachers work at developing relationships with their students so that their lessons will go well, they also develop relationships simply because they value and care for their students. In doing so, they put their students at the centre of their pedagogy. By caring for their students they believe that they will ultimately point them to understanding who they believe God is.

The past four chapters have extensively explored the four layers of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus. Throughout these chapters there is clearly a multifaceted relationship between these four layers. In the final chapter, I discuss how these four layers work together to understand the distinctive nature of SRE pedagogy and to further reflect on the research question: How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence how they embody their pedagogy?

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

This study used a qualitative methodology based on constructivist grounded theory methods to explore Special Religious Education pedagogy and answer the question: How do SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences influence their pedagogy? I chose constructivist grounded theory for this study because of its suitability for exploring issues of importance in people's lives where limited research has been conducted. It allowed the voices of the participants to be heard as well as allowing for the shift from the particularities of individual voices and experiences to the more general patterns that unite them. In this way, constructivist grounded theory provided a way of exploring both the unique and the universal across the cohort of SRE teachers.

Data from interviews of the twenty three SRE teachers, and journals from sixteen of the SRE teachers along with theoretical perspectives from social and educational sources, provided a rich source of material that was analysed to construct the theory of SRE pedagogy. This study was preoccupied with hearing the voices of SRE teachers to understand their pedagogy. As they are the ones who embody the beliefs and experiences of SRE teaching I wanted to attend closely to the particularities of their views. I started by listening to the SRE teachers talk about their beliefs and experiences in semi-structured interviews, and by hearing from their teaching experiences as they wrote in their journals. The listening continued as I laboriously listened to the recordings of the interviews to transcribe them. Throughout the iterative analysis I "listened" to the SRE teachers' voices as I read and coded their words and gradually moved from the particularities of their individual experiences to the broader and more conceptual understanding of SRE pedagogy as a whole; to hear the trends and commonalities that thread through their voices. Through this ongoing listening, I became familiar with the SRE teachers' voices and could readily identify who was speaking and was able to see patterns and similarities within the complexity of SRE. I constructed the conversations to enhance my analysis and enable the individual voices of the SRE teachers to continue to be heard and to listen to each other. I also chose to use substantial quotes from the teachers in my writing because of the significance of what they had to say and to clearly identify both the unique and the "universal" aspects of SRE pedagogy.

In the shift from the particular to the general, constructivist grounded theory is a kind of hermeneutical research. It helped me to make sense of SRE pedagogy by understanding its individual dimensions. Looking closely at the data by initially coding individual lines of data,

then grouping together focused codes and finally moving towards conceptual categories enabled me to explicate both the uniqueness and universal nature of SRE pedagogy by looking at different SRE teachers' data concurrently. Understanding both the unique and the general depended upon careful listening to the voices of the SRE teachers. van Manen (2006b, p. 713) points out that to theorise and write about pedagogy requires being

> attentive to other voices, to subtle significations in the way that things and others speak to us… These words need to touch us, guide us, stir us.

I have been touched, guided and stirred by the words of these SRE teachers. They have helped me to understand the distinctive nature of SRE pedagogy. But theirs are not the only voices I have listened to. I have also been guided by the voices of an array of thinkers including Bernstein, Buber, Buchanan, Derrida, Keltcherman, McGrath, Metcalfe and Game, Noddings, Palmer, and van Manen. In addition, the voices of constructivist grounded theorists, in particular Charmaz, guided me through each step of this study and encouraged me to continue listening to the voices of the SRE teachers. The SRE Pedagogy Lotus grew out of the voices of the SRE teachers and was fertilised by the voices of these great thinkers.

Some of the universal aspects of SRE pedagogy exist because of its close relationship with both classroom pedagogy and RE pedagogy. On first view it appears that classroom, RE and SRE pedagogy all share common pedagogical space. They all operate within a schooling paradigm governed by relevant legislation where the teacher determines what happens in the classroom. In this pedagogic relation, the teacher intentionally works for the good of his/her students using a curriculum in the expectation that the students will participate and engage in a well-delivered lesson. Although SRE bears a strong resemblance to classroom teaching it is *not quite like* it in several ways. SRE lessons usually take place in classrooms but they are *not quite like* the other lessons because the owner of the classroom moves aside to let the SRE teacher teach. SRE lessons teach about religion but it is taught in a way that is *not quite like* the General Religious Education that is taught in a public school classroom. The SRE teacher is also *not quite like* the classroom teacher because s/he does not have to have teaching qualifications to teach, s/he is not part of the school staff or responsible for the students in the same way that the classroom teacher is. SRE also bears a strong resemblance to RE teaching, but it is *not quite like* it either. Both SRE and RE teach about religion from a position of faith; that is they use a faith-based approach. However, while RE teachers may be able to call their student to make a commitment to faith, SRE teachers can only take a faith-sharing approach

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but cannot proselytise. In addition, RE teachers work within a school community whose ethos supports their religious teaching but SRE teachers work within a school ethos where their religious belief is not acknowledged.

SRE pedagogy is *not quite like* other pedagogy because of the legislative and school context in which it is taught, the faith-based nature of the subject that is being taught, and the differences between the experiences of SRE teachers and other classroom teachers. These three distinctive characteristics mean that it is not possible to describe a SRE pedagogy in a few sentences because it is a multi-layered pedagogy whose complexity is a result of the contingencies and tensions of SRE teaching that are experienced and enacted differently by different SRE teachers. As a result, SRE teachers each embody their pedagogy in the classroom in nuanced and individual ways according to their own beliefs and experiences about God, teaching, children, schools and why they teach SRE.

The SRE teachers' understanding about God and their sense of calling that is derived from this, deeply influences their pedagogy. Fourteen of the SRE teachers specifically described being called by God as their reason for either teaching SRE or working in ministry in the church that includes teaching SRE; and the other nine SRE teachers alluded to this without direct reference to calling. Regardless of the terminology they use, it is apparent that all the SRE teachers trust that God has given them this task to do and they persevere because of this. However, being called is not a vaccination against pain or difficulty in a classroom where the SRE teachers bring a faith that is not always valued by the school or affirmed in the homes of the students who attend classes. For some SRE teachers the task is a simple detour in a busy week, but for others it is a challenge that must be overcome.

The SRE Pedagogy Lotus is a useful heuristic for representing and understanding the SRE teachers' beliefs and experiences that influence their pedagogy. It is made up of four layers that are held together from both the outside and the centre. The outer cuticle *Guest and Host* layer provides a layer that supports and constrains all pedagogic activity. The
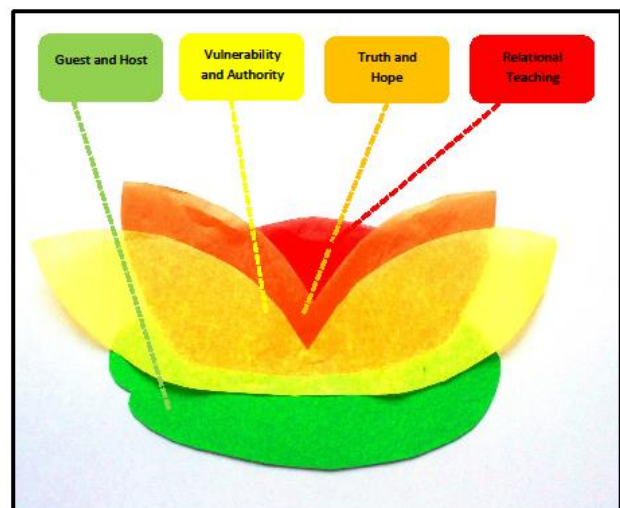
inner central *Relational Teaching* layer represents the heart of pedagogy where relationships are valued over all other aspects of pedagogy. Between these two layers are the *Vulnerability and Authority* and *Truth and Hope* layers. These four layers are not completely separate. Instead they work synergistically, promoting one layer over another as the situation dictates. In this way, the SRE Pedagogy Lotus represents the dynamic and complex dimensions of SRE pedagogy.

9.1   Guest and Host

Experiences of being a *Guest and Host* form the outer layer or cuticle of the lotus and influence all other aspects of their pedagogy. As SRE teachers cross the threshold of public schools they become the guests of both the school and the classroom where they teach. For some this is a pleasant and welcoming experience, but for others it is difficult and they work hard to be a "good" guest for their hosts to change the tone of their welcome. As hosts, the school and classroom teachers have the power to determine how the laws of hospitality will be fulfilled, and how much an SRE teacher will be allowed to "make him/herself at home". Although education legislation makes it clear that schools must allow SRE teachers to come, the schools determine what making yourself at home looks like. For some SRE teachers this can mean not receiving an appropriate space to teach, having classroom teachers distracting their lessons, and not being told when a school event results in their lessons being cancelled. But it can also mean the classroom teacher freely shares his/her resources, helps out during the lesson, or provides extra support when required.

SRE teachers have to accept the hospitality they receive. Several of them are frustrated at the way they are treated especially when their limited lesson time is reduced by schools who take precious minutes of lesson time for assemblies, announcements, or other interruptions; or when administrative staff forget to inform them that their lesson has been cancelled. Regardless of the nature of their welcome or how they feel about it, they understand that they must behave in a peaceable manner wherever possible. Many SRE teachers take the time to cultivate good relationships with the school and classroom teacher because they believe that the more cooperative, helpful and friendly they are, the better the school staff will treat them.

Their understanding of how to behave as both a guest and host are to some extent guided by their understanding of the hospitality of God. Many of them describe God in terms

of the welcoming hospitality that these SRE teachers believe He offers to all people. They also believe that they should be imitators of His hospitality as they attempt to show unconditional love, acceptance and patience with their students. It is not always easy for SRE teachers to be loving, accepting and patient because they must deal with the challenges of teaching in a classroom that is not their own and with classroom teachers and students who do not always recognise them as teachers. Without a sense of God's calling to teach SRE and the moments when things go well, it would be difficult for some of the SRE teachers to continue teaching.

At its best, SRE teaching is an act of educational hospitality where SRE teachers listen to their students, share their own personal stories, admit when they make mistakes, and willingly answer their students' questions in the hope that their students will hear about their religious faith, enjoy the lessons, and keep returning to SRE each week. However, SRE lessons can also be the place where SRE teachers are humiliated by a classroom teacher's intervention, exhausted by the students' lack of interest, or simply hopeful that their lessons will be cancelled and they can have a week off from teaching.

As guests of the school, SRE teachers are often like a stranger who represents a different belief system to the hegemonic belief system of the school. Their authority as teachers is threatened because they are not seen to be either *in* or *an* authority. That is, they are not always in control of what happens in the classroom, nor are they seen to be possessors of sanctioned knowledge. These experiences make them potentially vulnerable and wary of the way they teach their subject. Unlike SRE teachers' experiences of teaching children in church where they are the hosts who can determine what will be taught, in schools they are the guests who must be careful of what they say and do. However, these experiences are mitigated by their belief that God has welcomed them and generously invited them to make themselves at home.

9.2   Vulnerability and Authority

The second layer of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus explores the SRE teachers' experience of *Vulnerability and Authority.* Any relationship that is guided by love is a potentially vulnerable undertaking, and as SRE teachers are guided by their love for the subject they teach and the God who calls them to teach it, it is not surprising that vulnerability is part of many SRE teachers' experience. They want to share what they love with students, and often

also have no choice but to share it with the classroom teacher as well. In this way, teaching SRE can become a vulnerable activity as SRE teachers' passion is openly on view for their students and the classroom teacher as they teach about something that is deeply important to them in what can be an ambivalent context. However, their experience of vulnerability and lack of authority is counterbalanced by their expressed belief that they teach under the authority of God who has called them to teach SRE and that they believe joins them in the classroom.

The relationship that all the SRE teachers believe they have with God is an asymmetrical relationship. God is in authority and they believe He calls them to do His will. While their experiences of authority in the relationship they have with their classroom teacher may vary, they believe that their ultimate source of authority comes from God. In effect, they work with God's delegated authority and become His ambassador or witness in the classroom. They believe that God is actively involved in their teaching, and sometimes uses His authority to take the lesson in a different direction than they had planned.

Regardless of whether SRE teachers are experienced classroom teachers or SRE teachers without any professional training, there are times when almost all of them have experiences of vulnerability and diminished authority in the classroom. This vulnerability is accentuated because they teach about something that they believe has eternal consequences and is therefore of great importance. For the SRE teachers, something of great moment is at risk of being ignored or devalued and this makes them more exposed. However, even in this challenging environment many of the SRE teachers describe their willingness to potentially increase their vulnerability by being open and honest about their own lives and faith. This willingness is motivated by their belief that being open will help their students to identify more easily with them and the faith they want to share.

Their relationship as guest of the school and classroom teacher significantly influences their experiences of vulnerability. For example, due to their guest status they do not have full control over their access to resources, the classroom they are given, the classroom teacher who remains in their classroom while they teach, or their timetable. They are professionally vulnerable because their pedagogic authority is not always accepted and they teach in what can be an ambivalent environment watched over by a classroom teacher. Most of them want their students to explore what they are being taught, but some are wary of

questions whose answers might be misconstrued by the classroom teacher. They are also personally vulnerable because they are open about something that is deeply important to them that can result in rejection, ridicule or other hurt.

The SRE teachers experiences of vulnerability are often manifest in the delegated authority they have in the classroom. Authority is something that is granted to teachers within the relationships they have with the students and the schools where they teach. Because of the unusual context of SRE, this authority is not always fully granted by the classroom teacher or students. SRE teachers and classroom teachers explicitly or implicitly negotiate where authority is placed in the classroom, and the students take cues from this to understand who represents authority in the classroom. Although the SRE teachers are an authority in the subject area where they teach and therefore generally have control of the instructional discourse in the classroom, when the regulative discourse is retained by the classroom teacher or retaken at his/her will, it is the classroom teacher who remains *in* authority.

Every SRE teacher experiences the granting of authority differently. Elissa and Michelle's experiences illustrate how different this can be. Elissa described the challenges she experienced in her year six class where she believed that the students did not see her as someone in authority but rather as a young girl who visited the school for thirty minutes a week. Although the classroom teacher tried to reinforce that she was someone to be respected by the students he had to constantly intervene in the lesson because she struggled to get the students' attention or manage their behaviour. The authority appeared to remain with the classroom teacher even though he was supportive and not trying to retain or diminish her authority. Elissa was discouraged and exhausted by the experience and sometimes hated going. In contrast, Michelle taught SRE in a school where she knew the staff because before she retired she had been a school principal. She described how she enjoyed teaching the students and rarely had any behavioural or classroom management problems when she taught even though she taught a class of about seventy year six students because there were not enough SRE teachers to take individual classes. She noted that if she ever needed extra help to deal with a difficult student she passed the student on to the classroom teacher supervising the lesson. Michelle taught the last lesson of the day and was asked by the school to hand out notes and dismiss the students, but often students would stay back and talk with her. She had taught many of their parents and they often had messages of hello to pass on from their parents. Michelle was granted full authority in this classroom. Michelle's teaching experience

and relationship within the community helped her to have both the instructional and regulative discourse in her lessons. Even when she chose to use the classroom teacher, it was as an adjunct to her authority.

Elissa described her year teaching the year six class as a "*bit of a non-event*", where she did not "*actually know what they learned*". However, even SRE teachers with a less extreme experience of teaching SRE can struggle to know what their students learned. Consequently, the SRE teachers' eschatological hope is very important and it keeps them teaching even in their most vulnerable moments by giving them the confidence that their teaching will make a difference at some time in the future.

9.3   Truth and Hope

Truth and Hope is the third layer of the SRE Pedagogy Lotus that captures the SRE teachers' focus both on how their teaching may have a long term influence in their students' lives and on the immediacy of what is happening in their classrooms. They all believe that God's word presents a spiritual truth that is life-changing and have an eschatological hope that their students will embrace this truth. However, they understand that the context in which they teach requires them to carefully consider how they present this truth so that (i) it is engaging and accessible to their students, (ii) it does not disrespect the views of their students' families, and (iii) it adheres to legislative and school expectations. They also have an eschatological hope that their teaching will have deep, spiritual impact on their students in the future, and an immediate hope that each lesson will unfold in positive ways, engaging their students with ideas about faith. The SRE teachers' eschatological hope for their lessons is best expressed in terms of sowing seeds. All of the SRE teachers express the belief that while their teaching may not appear to make any difference from week to week, that something more profound and long-term may be occurring as the seeds they plant gradually take root and grow into strong and fruitful trees. This eschatological hope gives the SRE teachers the patience and forbearance to overcome the immediate challenges of teaching SRE.

Most SRE teachers believe that SRE is *like other learning* that happens in a classroom. For many SRE teachers, this belief results in a pedagogy that emphasises the achievement of student outcomes, completion of student activities, and obedience to the authority structures of a classroom and school. However, SRE teachers also believe that SRE

is *unlike other learning* where they create a space for students to talk about issues of faith and belief. Such a space emphasises personal sharing where SRE teachers take more time to develop relationships with their students. While they are all motivated by the hope that one day their students may choose to accept their faith beliefs, all the SRE teachers know that SRE is not the place to call a student to a faith commitment. This is distinctively different to the experience of teaching students about faith in the church context or teaching RE in faith-based schools. This context (and its legal/institutional underpinning) influences the way they teach their lessons. For some, this means objectifying their language and generalising about "what Christians believe" rather than talking about it from a personal perspective. For others, their awareness that students have the right to opt in or opt out of SRE presents a pressure to ensure that SRE is an enjoyable part of the school week so that students will continue to want to attend. Some of the SRE teachers are also wary of how the truth they are teaching about is perceived by the classroom teacher and take care in how they answer questions and how far they let their students express their ideas. In general, the resulting pedagogy is one that takes a faith-sharing educational approach to religious education. In this way it sits between the objective educational approach of General Religious Education in public schools and the subjective faith-forming educational approach of RE in a faith-based school.

Closely connected with their belief in God's authority is the SRE teachers' belief that God's word is found in the bible and is the authoritative truth about who God is and how they should live. Although the SRE teachers believe that the bible provides the content for their teaching, the majority of them recognise that the bible does not always contain material that is appropriate or easy for children to understand. Therefore, the SRE teachers have to take the sacred text that they believe contains their absolute truth and carefully consider how they will teach it to their students. Broadly speaking, the SRE teachers' belief about what to teach from the bible falls into two main groups: those who believe that nothing should be left out, and those who believe that some things are not appropriate to teach children. Although the SRE teachers may not agree on what to leave in or leave out from the bible, they all recognise that at times they need to make contingent truth moves to make the bible more accessible and engaging for their students. These contingent truth moves include connecting with their students' lives and knowledge, creatively retelling bible stories and giving them time to ask the questions that are important to them.

Integral to the SRE teachers' presentation of truth are the teaching resources provided by SRE Providers. These resources contain lesson plans and curriculum that include detailed descriptions of activities that provide ways to teach the bible story, classroom activities and workbook activities. Most of the SRE teachers believe that their lessons should give students the opportunity to explore more deeply what they are learning and to spend more time in things they do not understand. Adhering closely to a weekly lesson plan presents a challenge to these SRE teachers who want to share their faith in a relational way rather than working through a series of activities and outcomes in the Teacher Books that at times may seem banal and disconnected from the numinous truth they want their students to explore. The majority of SRE teachers using the Teacher Books describe how they modify the lesson plans to fit more appropriately with their students, teaching styles and situation. The SRE teachers in this study dealt with this issue differently; some stayed within the course that was set out for them by the Teacher Books, others made minor changes to the lessons, two teachers spread their lessons over more than one week, and others made major changes to the lesson plans.

The curriculum that is provided to SRE teachers reflects an expectation that SRE lessons will cover a set of biblical themes and stories over the school year. Although most of the SRE teachers modify their lessons very few of them are willing to continue an unfinished lesson the following week. Most of the SRE teachers believe that they need to complete the lesson each week and move onto a new lesson regardless of whether they finished the previous lesson possibly because this is how their resources are written. As a result, many of them race to finish a lesson each week rather than dwelling in a topic until they are ready to move on. And yet, several of the SRE teachers described moments when they completely disregarded the lesson plans and allowed the students' interest and questions to guide the lesson. One teacher, Bart, described this event as the pinnacle of his teaching year.

It could be that these resources take the decision regarding what to teach out of the hands of the SRE teachers, but in the reality of their classrooms many of the SRE teachers want to move away from the confines of the Teacher Books and focus on what is of importance and relevance to a student or students at a particular moment in time. This creates a tension for SRE teachers who feel the pressure to complete all the lessons and ensure that everything is covered in the Teacher Books, but who also value developing relationships with their students and focusing on the issues that interest them.

9.4   Relational Teaching

Relational teaching lies at the centre, or heart, of SRE pedagogy. It gives life blood to all aspects of the SRE teachers' pedagogy because their experiences and beliefs that are reflected in each layer of the lotus are all tempered by their relational teaching. The SRE teachers emphasise how developing a good relationship with their students helps them to establish a positive learning environment. By putting relationships at the centre of their pedagogy, their interest in the child comes to the forefront. However, the SRE teachers also bring a spiritual dimension to the importance they place on developing good relationships with their students. Their expressed belief that God is relational, their sense of calling to SRE and their desire to share the possibility of having a relationship with God drives them to work on positive relationships with their students. In addition to the relationships between SRE teachers and their students, the SRE teachers also recognise the importance of developing positive relationships with the classroom teacher that stays when they teach and other school staff who act as gatekeepers of the hospitality they receive.

Relational teaching emphasises the importance of an intentional relational space between students and their teachers that is marked by care, hospitality and mutuality. SRE teachers, like their classroom and RE counterparts, care for their students because they recognise how this can improve educational outcomes for students. In this way, SRE pedagogy shares a common space with classroom and RE pedagogy. Due to the limited time that SRE teachers have with their students, several of them describe how they talk with students before and after their lessons often in school playgrounds to help develop these relationships. Unlike classroom and RE teachers, the SRE teachers know that their students can choose to not attend SRE. They understand that the better the relationship they have with their students, the less likely it is that their students will choose to leave. However, like any relationship these relationships take time which is limited for SRE teachers. Paradoxically, because students are free to stop attending SRE, it could be possible for an SRE teacher to encourage a student that s/he found difficult to opt out of SRE. However, only one SRE teacher admitted that she would do that. For the other SRE teachers, encouraging students to stay by being loving and generous even if, as in Jane's case, they were being bullied, was an important facet of their relational teaching.

The SRE teachers in this study are motivated to teach SRE because of the love they believe that they receive from God. They believe that God's love is an agape love; that is, an

unconditional love for another. They believe that as this is the love they have received from God that they should express it in their teaching. Such a love is the direct, mutual and open love of the I-Thou relation that cares for students as valued people in an intentional pedagogic relationship. However, the enormity of this love is not an easy thing to be faithful to in the confines of a thirty minutes SRE lesson. In reality, the SRE teachers often struggle to remember their students' names or find time to listen to them in the time they have or in the spaces they teach. Some of their classes are so large that it would be difficult to interact with all their students even if they had a full school week to do so. In addition, the adherence to lesson plans that are written by someone else and their concerns about what their classroom teachers will think of some of the content that they are teaching can also lessen their ability to teach relationally. There are times when showing God's love requires a large investment of emotional labour by the SRE teachers as they try to not get angry, lose their temper or get discouraged when things are difficult in the classroom. Although they are willing to invest in this emotional labour because they believe that caring for their students helps their students to see what God is like, it is not always easy for them.

Through it all, the SRE teachers all find strength in their belief that God is a relational God. All the SRE teachers share the belief that it is possible to have a meaningful relationship with God that can be described as "walking with God". They believe that God is nearby and not distant, and because of this they believe that God is intimately involved in their lives in general, and in SRE specifically as He helps them to prepare their lessons and teach. Their expressed belief that God is relational, that He has called them to teach, and their desire to share with their students the possibility of having a similar relationship with God compels them to spend time working on their relationship with both God and their students. They believe that they develop their relationship with God through reading the bible and prayer. Prayer plays an important role in the SRE teachers' pedagogy. They believe that prayer is the way that God communicates with them and guides them in their lessons. They also believe that prayer can change what is happening in a classroom and enable learning to take place.

9.5   Conclusion

This study is important because it provides insight into SRE pedagogy by listening to the voices of twenty three SRE teachers who teach in a variety of contexts. The resulting SRE Pedagogy Lotus is a constructed theory that helps to explicate the complex multifaceted nature of SRE. Rather than concluding with a set of recommendations I would like to

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describe how this study may guide SRE teachers and providers in their thinking and practice. This is important because of the axiological nature of SRE pedagogy where individual teachers take their values into the classroom and translate them in their own particular ways. Prior to this study I believed that SRE teachers needed a pedagogical "to do list", however, this journey has taught me that SRE pedagogy does not work like that. It is a personal outworking of a teacher's epistemology, axiology and methodology. I therefore conclude this thesis with suggestions of how this theory may guide SRE teachers and SRE providers, and curriculum developers so that SRE students may have the opportunity to learn in engaging and generous classrooms.

This study can provide guidance in the provision of SRE for SRE teachers and SRE Providers. It may also provide a place of reflection for religious teachers working in faith-based schools and in churches. Clarifying that SRE pedagogy adopts a faith-sharing educational approach could help to guide what SRE teachers do in the classroom and what teaching resources they need to enable this to take place. The study is therefore helpful for both SRE teachers and the SRE Providers who train, support and provide resources to SRE teachers.

This study provides SRE teachers with a way of thinking about what they are doing that could affirm or challenge their current practices, as well as help them to explicate both their unique and common experiences within the complexity of SRE pedagogy. This has already been the case in informal discussions with other SRE teachers who have asked what I am learning in my research. Some of these SRE teachers I have spoken with are enthralled by the results especially when the findings in this study resonate strongly with their own experience. By naming and understanding what is going on in their classrooms and schools, SRE teachers will increase their understanding of how they need to relate to their students, as well as the classroom teachers and other public school staff. This study may also give SRE teachers the space to consider where their stories fit into the narrative of SRE pedagogy and to realise that their experiences and beliefs are also important for understanding what SRE pedagogy is.

The study also provides insight for the SRE Providers who train and support their SRE teachers. It acts as a reminder that training SRE teachers involves more than providing them with a set of teaching strategies. SRE pedagogy requires an understanding of the

distinctive context of SRE and the resultant tension within the guest and host relationships that exist between schools and SRE teachers. While legislation allows SRE teachers to enter schools and teach SRE, helping SRE teachers to navigate these complex relationships will help both the SRE teachers and the schools where they teach. This study is a reminder of the relational nature of SRE teaching and the need to give SRE teachers the space and skills to not only develop relationships but understand them as integral to the learning process. In addition, SRE Providers could help their teachers to explore their understanding of truth and how to present it in an SRE classroom. It is clear from this study that there are times when teaching SRE is challenging and opens the SRE teachers to vulnerability and disappointment. It is important that the SRE Providers understand this and develop ways of supporting their SRE teachers in the complex and challenging environment in which they teach.

Finally, for SRE curriculum developers this study emphasises the need to review and evaluate current thinking in providing resources. The Teacher Books provide ongoing training and guidance to SRE teachers as each week the SRE teachers return to the lesson plans to know what and how to teach. Such an important resource needs to be giving the best support to SRE teachers by providing them with the flexibility to modify their lessons. The resources should also enable the SRE teachers and their students to spend longer in an area of interest and not rush to finish a lesson. Finally, because SRE is taught in small and large classes, sometimes with students from different years grouped together, and sometimes in classrooms without enough desks for all the students the teaching resources need to be developed to support SRE teachers in the variety of ways their classrooms can be set up.

I hope that this study is the beginning of a more rigorous exploration of SRE pedagogy. The limitation of this study was that it only looked at the experience of Christian SRE teachers. As there are SRE teachers of many faiths it would be interesting to contrast their pedagogy to the pedagogy discussed in this study. Also of interest are the experiences and beliefs about SRE that are held by classroom teachers and school principals. Research into a school's experience of SRE would provide broader insight and understanding into the context of SRE teaching and the relationships that are important in the provision of SRE. In addition, it would also be interesting to compare GRE, RE and SRE teachers' pedagogy and how it influences the way that different teachers teach about faith in their specific contexts. Finally, the voices of the students are silent in this study. In another study, it wold be

interesting to hear their voices as they reflect on the way their teachers teach about religious faith.

Ultimately, SRE pedagogy is about what happens for students in the SRE classroom. But pedagogy is not just about what happens in the classroom activities that are dictated by outcomes and curricular expectations. Pedagogy is the way that teachers embody their beliefs and experiences to intentionally focus on the learning needs of each child they teach. SRE pedagogy is a pedagogy that is complex and multi-layered which is similar to, but also unlike classroom and RE pedagogy. SRE teachers' methodological approaches in the classroom are all influenced by the context in which SRE is taught, the nature of the subject that is taught, and the teachers who teach it: their beliefs and experiences about God, children, schools and teaching.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.1 – Religions organisations authorised to teach SRE in New South Wales public schools

The following religious organisations are authorised to teach SRE in New South Wales:

- Anglican Church of Australia
- Apostolic Church Australia
- Armenian Church of Australia
- Assemblies of God
- Associated Christian Assemblies International (ACMI)
- Association of Vineyard Churches
- Bahá'í Faith
- Buddhist Council of New South Wales
- Roman Catholic Church
- Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy
- Independent Christian Churches
- Christian Brethren Assemblies (or Open Brethren)
- Christian City Church
- Christian Outreach Centre
- Christian Reformed Churches of Australia
- Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormon)
- Church of the Foursquare Gospel
- Baptist Union of New South Wales
- Christian Missionary Alliance of Australia
- Orthodox Archdiocese of Australia
- Islamic Council of New South Wales Inc.
- Lutheran Church of Australia New South Wales District
- New South Wales Board of Jewish Education
- New South Wales Christadelphian Committee
- Presbyterian Church
- Sabian Mandaean Association in Australia
- Serbian Orthodox Church
- Seventh-Day Adventist Church
- The Churches of Christ
- The Salvation Army
- Uniting Church in Australia
- Vishva Hindu Parishad of Australia

Appendix 1.2 – State variations in the provision of SRE in Australia

State: Australian Capital Territory			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
Religious Education in ACT Government Schools 2008	Instruction in a particular religion as delivered by a representative of a religious body.	Co-ordinated by individual schools in cooperation with specific religious bodies and parents.	Parents may request religious education for their child/ren, responsible for organising provision with religious body.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Provided by participating religious bodies.	Classes from the regular, approved school curriculum are provided.	No more than forty minutes per week; or seven hours per school term.	(ACT Department of Education and Training, 2008)
State: New South Wales			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
NSW Education Act 1990	Education in the beliefs and practices of an approved religious persuasion by authorised representatives of that persuasion.	Timetable to be fixed by agreement between principal and SRE teachers.	Parents have the right to enrol their child in, or object o any form of SRE.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Provided by participating religious bodies.	No formal lessons can occur during this time. Students can complete homework, study or read.	No more than one hour per week.	(NSW Department of Education and Training, 1999-2011)
State: Northern Territory			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
Northern Territory Education Act 2007	Instruction in a particular faith as distinct from the general study of a variety of different religions, delivered a representative of a religious organisation.	Principal may provide religious instruction in schools; must provide separate spaces for each program of religious instruction.	Parents may request religious instruction in writing.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Provided by participating religious bodies.	Appropriate alternative programs that do not educationally disadvantage religious instruction students must be provided for students not attending.	No more than five hours per term; no more than one hour per week.	(Northern Territory Department of Education and Training, 2011)
State: Queensland			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
Queensland Education (General Provisions) Act 2006	Religious instruction in the beliefs, principles or positions provided by a religious organisation	Principal must arrange for students who do not attend to receive other instruction during the SRE period.	Parents may withdraw consent for their children to attend SRE.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Provided by participating religious bodies.	Students must receive other instruction in a separate location.	Not more than one hour per week; not in prep year of school.	(Queensland Department of Education and Training, 2006)
State: South Australia			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
South Australian Education Act 1992	Based on distinctive religious tenets or beliefs and may be provided in public schools by persons authorised to deliver SRE.	Must ensure that parents are fully informed about religious seminars.	Must indicate whether they agree to their children participating.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Provided by participating religious bodies.	Not stated.	One half day seminar per term.	(South Australian Legislation, 1997)

State: Victoria			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
Victorian Education and Training Reform Act 2006	Instruction provided by churches and other religious groups and based on distinctive religious tenets and beliefs.	Principal should make provision for special religious instruction where an accredited instructor is available.	Classes are not compulsory, parents can choose to have their children excused from attending.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Providing by participating religious bodies.	Secular instruction may not be timetabled while special religious instruction is running.	Thirty minutes per week.	(Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, 2006)
State: Western Australia			
Education Act	**Definition**	**Principal's role**	**Parents' role**
Western Australian School Education Act 1999	Religious education which may be provided by authorised volunteers from churches and other religious groups, based on distinctive tenets and beliefs.	Principal may allow time for religious education.	Parents notify principal in writing if their child is not to receive religious education.
Resources	**Students not attending**	**Timetabling**	**Source of information**
Provided by participating religious bodies.	Not stated.	No more than forty hours per year.	(Western Australia Department of Education 2011)

Appendix 1.3 – Teaching resources provided by SRE Providers that support SRE teachers in this study

Organisation	Curriculum
ACCESS Ministries www.accessministries.org.au	Launch (kindergarten/prep), Trek (years 1 and 2), Search (years 3 and 4) and Quest (years 5and 6). Each series has three years of lessons.
Youthworks www.youthworks.net	Beginning with God (kindergarten), Connect (curricula for years 1 and2, years 3 and 4, years 5 and 6), Big Questions (additional curriculum for year 6). Each series has three years of lessons.
Baptist Church www.children.baptist.asn.au	GodSpace – curricula for Kindergarten, years 1 and 2, years 3 and 4, years 5 and 6. Each series has three years of lessons.
Broken Bay CCD www.brokenbay.catholic.org.au	Walking with Jesus: Pathways of Discipleship – three year curriculum for Kindergarten, years 1 and 2, years 3 and 4, years 5 and 6.
Sydney CCD www.ccdsydney.catholic.edu.au	Christ our Light and Life – curricula for Kindergarten, year 1, year 2, year 3, year 4, year 5, year 6. Two years of lessons for each series. .
Uniting Church of NSW www.childrensministry.org.au	Launch, Trek, Search and Quest (ACCESS Ministries curriculum as above)

Appendix 3.1 – Interview 1 possible questions

- Why did you start teaching SRE?
- Tell me about an SRE class that you thought went really well.
- Describe a time when you felt like giving up teaching SRE.
- What do you wish you could do better when teaching SRE?
- How do you feel when you are teaching?
- What difficulties have you encountered when teaching SRE?
- Describe the things you look for to know that children are learning in your class?
- At the end of a lesson, what things do you think about to work out whether you have done a good job?
- What are the important lessons you have learned about teaching?
- What is the SRE teacher's role in the classroom?
- How are your religious beliefs reflected in the way you teach SRE?
- Describe your relationship with the school where you teach SRE.
- How do the resources you use help you to be an effective SRE teacher?
- What experiences have you had that influence the way that you teach SRE?
- If your students were describing their SRE teacher, what would you like them to say?

Appendix 3.2: Possible questions for Eleanor's second interview

Eleanor specific questions:

- You talk about seeing "a sense of trust developing" what does that mean to you? Can you give some examples?
- How do you feel about the student recalling little from year to year?
- How would you change this?
- Describe some of the questions students ask. How do you deal with them?
- You talk about students being too tired for more input, what do you do when this happens?
- How does God use what you do in SRE?
- Can you tell me more about your role as an "ambassador for Christ"?

Generic questions:

- What is it about teaching SRE that makes you always feel like you haven't got enough time?
- If you had as much time as you wanted, how would this change your teaching?
- Why is <u>who</u> we are important?
- How would you behave differently if there wasn't a teacher in the room?
- Tell me about a time when you were aware of the Holy Spirit at work in your classroom?

Appendix 3.3 : Participant information letter

Research Project Title: Exploring pedagogy in Special Religious Education: Towards a grounded theory of SRE pedagogy.

You are invited to participate in the research project identified above which is being conducted by Kaye Chalwell from the School of Education at the University of New England. The research is part of Kaye Chalwell's Masters of Education (honours) supervised by Associate Professorr Mary Macken-Horarik and Dr Genevieve Noone of the University of New England. of the University of New England. Associate Professor Mary Macken-Horarik can be contacted by email at mmackenh@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 67733562. Dr Genevieve Noone can be contacted by email at gnoone@une.edu.au or by phone on 02 6773 2629. I can be contacted by email at kchalwe@une.edu.au or phone on 02 96984226.

Why is this research being done?

The purpose of this research is to explore SRE teaching. It aims to increase understanding of both the nature of effective teaching in SRE and the factors that result in effective SRE teaching.

Who can participate in the research?

The researcher is seeking teachers in NSW who are currently teaching SRE, and teachers in Victoria who are currently teaching CRE to participate in this research.

What choice do you have?

Participation in this research is voluntary. To be included in the project you are required to give written consent. There will be no disadvantage to you if you decide not to participate. If you do decide to participate and complete the attached consent form, you may withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason and have the option of withdrawing any data you contributed to the research.

What would you be asked to do?

If you agree to participate, you will agree to the following:

1. participating in an interview at the beginning and end of term 2, 2011; these interviews will be audio-taped.

2. completing a short reflective journal after ten lessons in terms 2 and 3, 2011.

How much time will it take?

When a participant has agreed to be involved in the study, the time involvement will be as follows:

1. interview – between 30 minutes and one hour for each interview

2. reflective journal – approximately 15 minutes after each lesson.

What are the risks and benefits of participating?

There are no risks to your personal or social safety by participating or choosing not to participate in this research. There are no direct benefits of participating in the research, however, the knowledge gained from the research may benefit SRE/CRE teachers in the future.

How will your privacy be protected?

Only the researcher and her two supervisors will have access to the data. The data will be secured in a locked cabinet at all times. The data that is transferred to computer will be protected by a secure password. The data will be kept by the supervisors for five years after the conclusion of the research and then be destroyed. Your name will only be kept to identify data by the researcher and will not be made available to anyone else. It will not be possible to identify you from the thesis or any academic papers published as a result of the research.

How will the collected information be used?

The collected information will be primarily used in a thesis submitted for Kaye Chalwell's degree. It is also likely that the information collected will be used in the writing of papers for academic publication. Ultimately, the data will be used to help improve SRE/CRE teacher quality. Upon completion of the research project, participants will be offered a summary of the results.

What do you need to do to participate?

Please read the Information Statement and be sure you understand its contents before you consent to participate. If there is anything you do not understand, of if you have any questions, contact the researchers at kchalwe@une.edu.au, mmackenh@une.edu.au, gnoone@une.edu.au.

If you are willing to participate, please contact Kaye Chalwell at kchalwell@une.edu.au so that a time to meet can be organised.

Complaints about this research

This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the University of New England (Approval No. HE10/144 Valid to 25/08/2012).

Should you have any complaints concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please contact the Research Ethics Officer at the following address:

Research Services
University of New England
Armidale, NSW 2351.
Telephone: (02) 6773 3449 Facsimile (02) 6773 3543
Email: ethics@une.edu.au

Further information

If you would like further information please contact Kaye Chalwell at kchalwe@une.edu.au

Thank you for considering this invitation.

Appendix 3.4: Participant Consent Form

Research Project Title: Exploring pedagogy in Special Religious Education: Towards a grounded theory of SRE pedagogy.

Do you agree to participate in the above research project   YES   NO

and give your consent freely?

Do you understand that the project will be conducted as   YES   NO

described in the Information Statement, a copy of which

you have retained?

Do you understand that you can withdraw from the project   YES   NO

at any time and do not have to give any reason for withdrawing?

I consent to

- Participating in two interviews   YES   NO

- completing a reflective journal after each   YES   NO

  lesson for ten lessons in term 2 and 3, 2011

- having the interviews audio recorded   YES   NO

Do you understand that you will not be personally identified   YES   NO

in the thesis or any academic papers.

Have you had the opportunity to have any questions   YES   NO

answered to may satisfaction.

Name: _____

Contact details: _____

Signature: _____   **Date:**

Appendix 5.1 – Guest and Host Conversation

"We're guests, we're volunteers," explains Jane. *"If the teacher's in the classroom, it doesn't matter how nice the teacher is, I feel very much like I am the guest and my teaching is very different when they are there"*. "It is very difficult," agrees Shirley. *"I'm the visitor and I have to be polite not matter what the interruptions are. I can have three teachers in the room all talking while I'm trying to do my lesson. It's just not fair, certainly not polite."* Jane nods, "that happens to me too. *The classroom teacher will have a conversation with another teacher…Honestly their desk is there and the kids are sitting on the floor. And they come in and it's as if there's no class."* "Having a teacher in the room can be good and it can be bad. One of my teachers can be talking on the phone, or planning excursions. I put up with it for a long time and then I* stopped teaching until she stopped talking." Shirley laughs, *"it seems to have helped as the teacher now goes outside* to talk." "It can also be tricky," adds Bart, "because *there are times when teachers feel they need to be officious at the beginning and take control and not let me* teach. But *having said that, there are times when they can be on board and be quite helpful."*

"There's a little boy called Sam and he has ADD, and I think I find that difficult," starts Mary. *"I caused a bit of a stir, when I first got them they were singing out and I couldn't get control whatsoever. Sam was mucking up a treat and I got him to sit in the next room so that he was right away from the children. One of the teachers walked straight past me in front of the class. She went up to Sam and brought him to me and said, 'do you know this boy has special needs?'"* Mary hesitates for a moment and then continues, *"I was so angry, I went to the principal and she calmed me down. The principal said it's my class and I can teach my way."* "You're fortunate that the principal supported you," observes Joshua. *"Three years ago, my school principal was scarcely welcoming, But now I make a point of showing an interest in the school. I'm not just an interloper; if I can get anything useful for the teacher or the school, I will get it for them."*

"Our schools have a positive view of the church *so it's easy to slot in. The school uses our church for their end of year things. We're still living in a village type* of world and *the church is still a big part.* When there is *anything important on at the school, the minister gets invited. They are very much that way* because *the minister is still someone who is regarded as important. At the end of the year, we give a gift to each of the schools to thank them for allowing us in to teach"* says Renee. "That's the same out here," says Julia. *"The schools are welcoming. In a rural community you get to know the families; there's a sense of community. It's not hard to walk into the school, especially when you've been doing it a few years. No one is hostile."* "That's my experience too," says Eleanor. *"The whole mood of the school is very accepting"*. Beth's experience is also similar, *"we're always welcome to come to the staff room and have a cuppa. We're always invited to big staff morning teas. We're always welcome, we're well accepted here"*.

"It's not like that for me," says Ruby. "There is a *real lack of support and involvement from the schools. I'm not given a class roll and I'm dumped in a classroom with no teacher*

support, and they couldn't care less." "I've had such trouble with one school," says Nicole, *"the principal and I are often at loggerheads about what is right."*

"I've had the support of the teacher and I think that makes a massive difference," says Lisa. "The teacher isn't necessarily a Christian, but she says to the children, *'you have to listen and be on your best behaviour.*" "I've also had times when *I have gone to them and we have worked as a team* to solve a student problem," says Pearl. "I think that *more often than not* the classroom teachers *step back because they don't want to step on your toes. It's a show of support and I always appreciate it." "The teachers are so skillful,"* observes Avril, *"I depend on them to deal with bad behaviour." "*When I teach," says Beth, *"the teacher has a word in their ear and they're fine." "*For me it's simple," says Nicole, *"I need the classroom teachers to do their job,* and I need a *teacher on duty all the time and discipline policy in place otherwise it's not fair on the other kids. And it's not my job."*

"I try to build a good relationship with the classroom *teachers,"* explains Alicia. *"I try to mention things that are around the classroom or what the students are doing. I like to establish a good relationship with the classroom teacher if I can, because I might be the only Christian they meet*." *"Currently I'm teaching an ODD child in the half hour between my two SRE lessons,"* adds Shirley. *"This helps the kindergarten teacher greatly because she can get on and teach her class in a relaxed manner. I've also helped the teacher with getting the children to the playground in wet weather."*

"I also make sure that I *say hello to the receptionists and ask them how their day is and get to know their names and what is going on in their lives,"* says Ruby. *"'Every now and then,"* says Renee, *"we drop in morning tea to the teachers to acknowledge that they work hard. The ones who are good to get onside with are the office people. Get to know their names, get to know them." "*It's worth doing this kind of thing," says Beth, "because *if the school is keen to have you there it makes a big difference." "*I think that it comes down to this," says Nerida, *"there are things out of your control* ... like *the school's overall attitude to SRE. If there is a negative attitude or a culture that is negative about SRE that filters down to the kids; and there's not much you can do about that except try and build bridges."*

"Being a guest, there's no assumptions," says Jane, *"I'm not assuming and teaching the lesson as if it's my classroom. We're the guest, we're the volunteer. We have to ask to use things." "*Not only do we have to ask to use things, but we can't create a teaching space that suits our style," says Bart. *"I don't get to set or address my own space, can't add to it over a period of time, everything has to be portable, get up put down, everything is rushed, given the limitations I try to do the best I can." "*One lesson *my USB was missing two pictures and I didn't realise* until it was too late," says Stephen. "And then *the smart board jumped the order of pictures when I hit the forward button so I needed to close and open the program for every picture." "*It's hard, I can't put my finger on it," says Shirley." *I think because* teaching SRE is *so important that you've got the pressure to make the most of that thirty minutes. And it is such a pressure that it adds to the pressure.* When I was a teacher *I was able to choose the program, choose the sequence, in other words have it all my way."*

"*I guess I'm more of a visitor, so I don't have as much authority as a teacher,*" says Cathy. "That's why as a trained teacher," says Nerida, "I find teaching SRE to be *quite humbling. I can have fine classroom control when it's my class, but when I come in for twenty minutes and that's it; it's the hardest teaching I think I'll ever do.*" "It's the most frustrating thing for someone who has been a teacher in a school; you don't have the same authority and you can't make demands and expect them to be followed instantly,*" says Bart. "*I don't have the respect that the classroom teachers have,*" says Mary. "*I think the children are more in tune with their teachers because they are there day after day after day, whereas we are only there thirty minutes a week.*"

"It's so different to teaching at church," explains Elissa. "*In the church context I was known as the authority and it was known you had to be quiet when Elissa was talking. In the school context I was a young girl coming in for half an hour.*" "You're right," agrees Jane, "*this is how I see it; it is different to Sunday school where we are in charge. We are the owner of the house. The classroom teachers have authority over their classroom. They have ownership of their classroom, they have that freedom, that's not a freedom that I have experienced when I go into someone else's classroom to teach SRE. I'm mindful that I'm a guest there, whereas I don't feel like a guest* at church. *And guests behave differently to family members.*"

"Last week there was a girl *who cried through the whole lesson without telling me why,*" explains Shirley. "And *when I arrived in my third class one girl was in the thinking spot. She was allowed to join SRE but sat in the circle with her back to everyone else,*" says Pearl. "We don't know what's going on, and we don't have control over how many kids we teach," says Bart. "*My most difficult class doesn't have enough seats.*" "*A few years ago I had a class of fifty kindergarten to year two children. The teachers' support was below average, sometimes nonexistent,*" says Nerida.

"*Time sometimes has an element of it not going well,*" explains Michelle. "I lose time in my lesson because *it's a long distance at the school for the kids to walk to* where I'm teaching." "*If the school isn't on board with you then you're going to get delegated the dregs like at* one public school where I teacher, *they say 'we're running gymnastics so you have to finish the lesson at 9.22'. The kids only come in at five minutes past so in the end you only get 15 minutes.*" "We are entitled to half an hour to teach the way we want," says Mary. "But *it's not half an hour by the time they all straggle in.*" "This is why I've started taking the lessons over two weeks," says Shirley. "*By taking the time constraint away, I now feel that instead of teaching SRE I'm teaching children.*"

"Having a teacher in the room is where it can get tricky," says Beth. "*I've had some teachers that I know are watching me; some in a receptive way and others in a suspicious way* and this makes me wary.*" "SRE *is about giving children an opportunity to understand what Christianity is about,*" Michelle emphatically states; "and it's *not about me making them become a believer. I can't do that.*" Eleanor speaks quietly and the teachers lean forward to hear her, "*we can't say, 'look you need to believe in Jesus, 1,2,3 here we go'.*" "That's why

when some boys told me they don't believe in God," explains Joshua, "I said, *'that's OK you're free to believe, I'm not here to stuff it down your throats'.*" "

"*I wouldn't call kids to commitment in a classroom because I just don't think it's my role in SRE. I think parents have entrusted me their kids and I don't want to abuse that,*" explains John. "*So we need to keep in mind that there are certain lessons that almost end up disrespecting* parents' beliefs", says Elissa. "*At worse, they can think that it might be brainwashing or that we might try to convert them*". "But *sometimes,*" points out Beth, "*a child will ask a significant question and you can tell by the response of the class that everyone wants to know the answer to the question. Being aware that they're children and their age, and knowing there are things they don't' need to know I have to be careful*". "*We had a situation* where an SRE teacher *was talking about things to do with hell and had not stopped to think seriously about the consequences,*" explains Bart. "*Luckily not only could we step in but one of the teachers on staff who was a Christian, had opportunity to reflect a better way to do it*".

I'm motivated to work at having unconditional love and acceptance and care to every student there … there will often be opportunity to show acceptance, patience and kindness to a student. *It means I'm not going to be critical or judgemental or harsh. Again, my foundation for being there is knowing who God is and what His character is; and to be that way with all the students.* For example, t*here was a kid in my year six class last year who came to the school because he had as good as been expelled from his last school. The* classroom *teacher was like 'oh man' so I sought most weeks to try to really involve him so he had a key role.*

"In the lesson I taught on the Prodigal Son, *I wanted* the children *to say that 'God is the loving God who forgives everybody but we need to come to Him',*" explains Jane. *"God welcomes everyone who is sorry… But what does that mean? It means I go every day to God and say sorry, and when we are truly sorry, He forgives us." "And He accepts you as you are warts and all,*" says Nicole. "*He is there in the morning and He's there at the closing of the day. He is always there. He fills in the gaps and He does good things in your life*". "That's why it's important that when I go into teach," says Beth, "*I have to keep short accounts. I'd better not walk in with the expectation that the child is going to* do something wrong *again*. I need *to be loving, welcoming and accepting of the children, just as I believe Jesus would be*". "I want the *children to remember one thing,*" concludes Jane, "*God loves them and welcomes them back*".

"*I want to slow down and get to know the kids better,*" says Nicole. "Jesus is the guide here," says John. "*He tells the disciples not to hinder the children, but to let them come to him.* I think that starts with knowing their names." "Remembering their names is important for classroom management," says Pearl. "But it is also important because *I'm telling the kids that God knows and loves and cares for them so much that He knows the number of hairs on their heads. What am I teaching if I can't get their names right?*" "Knowing their names is important," concludes Jane. "*God is relational and we want to be*

*relational too. I don't want to be in a crowd of people that I've met five times before and have them not know my name. Nor do I want to be singled out, overlooked or just part of the crowd, s*o I don't want that for these children. Knowing their names *helps the children to feel that they are part of the lesson… it's embracing them at their level.*"

"*The last time in* my class *was ok.*" says Beth, "*there were four or five children who were paying attention to me and eleven who weren't. I got the ones who were listening to me to move somewhere else. Some children called out 'what about us?' and I said 'here's your worksheets if you want them.' Later on to my surprise, one of my difficult girls took the worksheet and sat all by herself. I went over to her and she wanted to show me her work. I thought 'wow she's got more done than she has in ages'. God was showing me something about this girl, I'm glad as I needed a bit of empathy for her. It was good God did that, otherwise how can I show the love of Jesus when I want them to be at the other end of the school?*

"*I went to a Christian school,*" explains Nerida, "*I decided I wanted to be a teacher after year three because I had a fabulous year three teacher. She opened up her life in the most personal way. She genuinely just cared so much for every child. She's the only teacher who volunteered to have a sleepover for her whole class with ice cream. She was nuts, but honestly as a seven year old I just thought she was the ant's pants. She exuded her love of life, her love of God and everything she did was intended to engage kids. It made me love school. I couldn't wait to go and because she shared her personal life so much. It just made faith so normal as well, she just talked about it all the time, God was part of her minutely conversation, and she lived it in her life you could see it. She was so hospitable even to a nutty point. That's an extreme version and I've learnt not to be like her, but she had a huge influence.*"

"Teaching SRE is different to that," explains Ruby, "because *the children are under no obligation to be there.*" John laughs, "*being optional gives us a challenge that other teaching doesn't have. Imagine if maths was optional; you'd have only a small proportion of kids there* too!" Several other teachers laugh and John continues, "so it's *worth having something that they really connect with so they go, 'yeah, I still want to come to SRE'.*" "And," adds Ruby, "*if they are having a good time they will want to come and bring their friends. So there's a tension to walk. You don't want to turn it into a thirty minute slot of games and child minding; at the same time you want them to walk away saying, 'that was fun and I learned about Jesus'.*"

"I guess the optional nature of SRE cuts both ways," continues Ruby, "*a couple of times I have actually pulled the kids aside and asked 'do you actually want to be here?' Your behaviour is showing that you don't, so why don't you go home and discuss that you don't want to be here with your parents.*" "I could never do that," states Jane. "Last year there was a difficult group of girls. A lot of prayer went into it. There was one girl where the other five girls seem to follow everything she did. There were times when I had to hold it together in the classroom. She would get the group and say 'oh look at that skirt' or 'look at that nose'; it*

was really personal stuff, it was like being a child. I was fine, it wasn't particularly nice but I was more concerned that the time was being wasted with the other kids. I didn't want them to be leaving SRE, and I thought if the girls were behaving like that there was a reason, and I preferred getting alongside them because I wanted to deal with the situation in such a way that the girl wouldn't decide to leave SRE." "I teach a class of thirty three kids," says Bart. "There are some really challenging kids; *sometimes I just want to sheep and goat them so that I can just work with the sheep.*" "I'm not sure if I know what you mean by that," says Lisa. "What I'm saying is," explains Bart, "*sometimes I would just like to teach the kids who want to learn. It's just not easy teaching some of these big classes.*" "I guess we'd all love to just teach the sheep, as you call them, but I don't want anyone to miss out," says Jane. "*I teach so many grades*," says Avril, "*I wouldn't mind just* teaching *two lessons. The way the children receive you and welcome you, while I can do it I can't see myself giving it up. I'm supposed to cut back* the number of classes I teach. *If I can find the volunteers I would. But I find them and then they pull out. could do with another teacher, what do I do? Do I let* the children *go or do I just do it?*

"*In one class I felt saddened by the treatment of the sole non-SRE student by the relief teacher,*" explained Eleanor. "*When* the teacher *noticed the child was hanging around listening to the lesson as I was talking to the whole group, she curtly said 'you don't do SRE, go and stand out in the hall'. When I had the opportunity while the students were working later I was able to bring him in and suggest he get a reading book to look at. I hope to take a simple picture book he might enjoy next week to show I care about him too, even though, as he pointed out to me, he isn't a Christian. He is new to the school this year and as a Muslim may feel quite isolated.*"

Appendix 5.2 The construction of *Guest and Host* as a conceptual category.

Conceptual category	Guest and Host	
Categories	Being a guest	
Focused codes	Being a guest Being different to classroom teaching Being different to other teaching Being flexible Being out of my control	Developing a relationship with the school Having a classroom teacher in the room Having enough time Opting in or opting out
Initial codes; for example:	Asking kids if they want to be there Being a guest in the room Being able to choose if they come or not Being courteous to the school Creating a teaching space Having a supportive principal Having no control over your environment Having no set up time Learning the language of the school	

Appendix 6.1: *Vulnerability and Authority* **conversation**

"There are so many things out of our control when we teach SRE," explains Nerida as she lists them off her fingers: "*The space that you're given, that is sometimes really pathetic and not conducive to learning*; *the combination of kids that you're given; teacher support from the school; and the school's overall attitude to SRE. If there's a negative attitude about SRE that filters down to the kids there's not much you can do about.*" "But I continue to go in because *I want the children to know about Christ and about having a living relationship with Him,*" says Jane. "*I know from my own personal experience of coming to Christ, it is the Holy Spirit that empowers and teaches.*" "*I'm hoping that in this big world where there are so many worries,*" says Nicole "*that* the kids *can grasp there is something beyond* them; *that there is a God who has it under control and has their best interest at heart. That there is hope and there is peace.*"

"When I became a Christian twenty six years ago," explains Jane, "*that day, that joy, has been a compulsion for Christ.* You might wonder *how the tired part of Jane, the fallen part of Jane, the personal part of Jane from divorce and looking after three children, and going back and earning a living; how with all that I can still have a joy for Christ which is not my natural state. It's the Holy Spirit serving Christ. I am compelled for Christ* because I know that I am loved and forgiven by God. *I am compelled for another generation of people to truly hear about Christ.*" Nicole smiles and says, "before I knew God *I used to wake up in the middle of the night and everything was so black and so hopeless. Now I wake up in the morning and I am praising God, worshiping God. He's there in the morning, He's there at the closing of the day. He is always there. He accepts you as you are; warts and all. He fills in the gaps and He does good things in your life.*"

"For me," explains Jane, "*SRE is not just a job; doing a lesson and coming out again.*" "That's what makes it so hard," says Ruby. "If it was just a task, rather than a ministry *I could probably walk away a lot less emotionally drained.*" "It can be difficult," continues Pearl, "but *I'm very motivated because I have a sense of God's call over the years.* I was at a conference when I heard someone sharing about SRE and *this big green light said 'this is now the time'.* Whether I have a difficult or easy class, *I fall back on being called by God. Even if I have a bad day, I think 'no, this is what God has got for me'.*"

Joshua puts down the piece of slice he is eating, "I also had a green light. *For quite a while I prayed to God for some job to do in His service. I didn't have any idea of what it might be. And suddenly I got a message* from God *to apply for SRE.* I did it for a while, but I stopped teaching because I was too busy with my work and had to prepare my lessons on the way to class. Then about ten years later, *I was waiting for a message, suddenly God said, 'Go and apply for SRE,' and the SRE coordinators said, 'We really need someone to do it.' It was just an answer to my prayer, so that fitted in very well. Every year I say to the Lord, 'It is getting a bit more difficult but with your grace I will keep going.*" Joshua laughs. "Now, at my age, *I teach on a year by year basis.*"

"My experience of a green light is similar," says Michelle. "When I retired, *I asked myself, 'what is it that God wants me to do?'* I received *a clear direction from God that my life wasn't finished, but it was starting again, and teaching SRE would be my mark of service, of showing my love and respect." "I think that's being called,"* states Avril. "*You have to believe that you are called by God to be there."* Michelle agrees, "*this is about eternity and God, and this is what I'm called to do. I am overwhelmed that God has given this to me. It is a great gift, and shows how much He must love me to allow me to do this for Him. It's spooky in some ways; scary in some ways. I better get it right, it's a humbling thing."* Julia adds, "I knew that I was called because it had never occurred to me to do children's ministry in any way *because I didn't have enough experience of kids, I was quite surprised* to be called by God to SRE."

"Perhaps I was nudged rather than called," Lisa says tentatively, "*I was sitting in church one week and they were crying out for SRE teachers and they didn't have anyone. They were looking at pulling out of this school and I felt this 'you should do that.' I actually went up and spoke to them afterwards and I said, 'can I pray about that, I'm really out of my comfort zone and I prayed about it for a week. I came back and said, 'I'm happy to do it'."* "That's why I started teaching too. I saw a need and I thought I could do it," Nicole explains. "But now I see that I was called. And even though my minister wants me to take on the youth group which would mean giving up on SRE, *I'm not going to because God hasn't told me to."* "I think you're making the right choice," says Beth. "I know that if God wanted me to stop teaching SRE *He would let me know and I would have peace about it.* So you'll know when the time is right."

"*I don't feel specifically called to SRE,*" says Bart, "*but to a much wider ministry to children and young people*. So SRE teaching fits within my broader calling." "That's the same for me," agrees John. "*I feel a specific and unmistakeable pull to be living and serving in this part of the inner city. While I do not feel specifically called to SRE teaching, I do it enthusiastically because I see it as one of the many aspects of serving in this area." "I started because I worked in the church in the kids' ministry so it was expected that I would teach SRE,"* says Elissa. Ruby nods, "that's the same for me, *I started teaching because it was part of my job, I was asked to do it; so I did it. I had no idea what I was walking into."* Bart adds, "I knew there was a need and I knew I had the training and experience to be able to do it. Is it a calling, is it my job? *It's difficult for me to unwrap and unravel what I do personally and what I do professionally. It's become one."* "I think," says Jane, "to be a teacher *you have to believe you are called by God to be there." "This is about eternity and God and this is what I'm called to do."* says Michelle. "*I always want to get my teaching right* when I was a classroom teacher, *but it is such a big responsibility knowing that you are presenting your belief and your faith in such a way that people are listening to it. It's spooky in some ways, scary in some ways. I better get it right. It's a humbling thing."*

"*The most frustrating thing for someone who has been a* classroom *teacher,"* explains Bart, "is that *you don't have the same authority as the teacher in the school and you can't make demands and expect to be followed instantly."* "Classroom teachers *have authority over*

their classroom," says Jane. *"They have ownership of their classroom; they have that freedom, that's not a freedom that I have experienced when I go into someone else's classroom to teach SRE."* "And because *you are not necessarily recognised as an authority figure,"* explains Alicia, *"you are going to have more difficulty with classroom control." "I have an authority,"* adds Bart, *"but it's not the same authority* as classroom teachers*, in the kids' eyes I have a different place in the school." "*That's why *I feel for the volunteers who don't have any skills or training in that area to fall back on,"* says Alicia. "And it's why I realised that *beginning in a more authoritative manner would have helped* me *to gain their respect,"* says Elissa. "I believe that *the children need to know that SRE is a normal lesson just like anything else at the school, that there are consequences and that's really communicated by whether the school teacher is backing that up by being there and doing things,"* says Nerida.

"I think that the students *generally view teachers as not real teachers even if you have more training and qualifications*," says Stephen. "*It is generally unhelpful to repeat your qualifications because you show pride, but* I do it to *just reinforce that I am authorised to teach and it's important that they show all their teachers respect." "*When I started teaching SRE," says Elissa, "I thought I could *go in and be their peer,* but *what they need is a teacher. Yes, it's nice for the kids to like their teacher and want to come to SRE but they do need some kind of boundary that says you are Mr so and so, or Mrs so and so." "*That's why *I call myself Mr Stephen, Mr for the authority and Stephen for the personal*," interjects Stephen. "It tells them that *you are someone to be respected and not someone to be trodden on,"* continues Elissa. *"Even if their classroom teacher is trying to reinforce that,* the children *don't have an understanding of me as someone in authority."*

"The difference is that classroom teachers *are there all day, they need the structure and they need the discipline,"* says Renee. *"But I can be more fun, I can be the nicer person."* Renee laughs*, "I'm not saying teachers can't be nice,* but *the classroom teachers still have to have some authority for the rest of the day. And even when we are in the classroom, if there is a naughty child we are not allowed to deal with it, we don't have the right to deal with it, the teacher steps in. At the end of the day, we don't have to be the bullies. In one class, if I have to speak to a child three times, the teacher takes the child away. I would deal with it differently but I don't have the power."*

"Classroom teachers have *authority over the classroom,"* says Jane. *"I think* the classroom teachers *expect me to be well prepared, professional, on time,* and *able to maintain a reasonable level of classroom control,"* says Pearl, *"although they are always very supportive and step in if they see fit."* "If they see fit!" exclaims Stephen. *"I'm actually surprised how often the teacher will make comment as if I need help when I don't think they've mucked up too much. I don't mind* them getting involved *it it's not overbearing and I'm not sensitive about it." "I'm glad that* the classroom *teachers are in the room,"* says Alicia, "because *they know the students. So they are good for classroom control,"* she pauses, and adds, "that is, *if they are doing their job." "When I first met the classroom teacher, I*

said 'you know you have to stay in the room?' So *now he sits at the front and I've said he can intervene, he can manage them and now he does"* explains Avril.

Bart sighs dramatically. "*There are times when* the classroom teachers *feel they need to be officious at the beginning and take control and not let me. There might be one person that they feel they need to grandstand and deal with in a public way which of course brings the lesson to a halt. So I don't always get to deal with it in my way, and that can be a problem. Having said that, there are times they can be on board and be quite helpful, at times they might help settle an individual down in a good way that doesn't disrupt the whole flow of the lesson."* "When you're an SRE teacher," laughs Michelle, "you can give the kids a warning, '*I've had enough of you calling out again, next time you're going to go to Mrs Smith.*' Then if one of *the kids call out again,* you can say, '*this is it, go to Mrs Smith', and stand out of the way. It's not your problem anymore. You tell Mrs Smith, 'I've had enough of that kid, you do something about it' and it's her who has to."* "You would think that *being a* classroom *teacher,"* says Nerida, "that *in theory I can do it without a teacher supporting* me in the classroom. *But it's a different relationship, I'm not being paid and I'm not a member of staff, so I really do need the school to be supportive and have that teacher there, and not just present in the room, but doing what they're meant to be doing which is the behaviour management part of it."*

"I can *have a bit more of a relaxed approach* than the classroom teacher*,"* explains Patricia. "There might be *a couple of boys talking at the back,* but *I know they are still kind of listening to me because they will respond now and again; and if it's not a particularly vital part of the lesson or something I kind of let that go.* But *sometimes the teacher will step in and say 'come on boys you need to be listening' and sometimes that's hard because it undermines my authority."*

"Last year," says Elissa, "my classroom *teacher had to constantly intervene, because I couldn't manage the class. And that was discouraging for me because he had to stay because I can't keep them under control."* "You're not the only one who couldn't *control the class,"* says Renee. "*I know lots of teachers who spend more time having trouble with the class rather than actually teaching. I think you need to be confident. We have one teacher who has been teaching all year, she doesn't feel confident in the class and she still has trouble with them. As soon as you walk into the class you know she is scared. As soon as you do that the kids feel uneasy and they start being naughty. I think kids like to know where they stand, it gives them security."* "I'm not a trained teacher," says Joshua, "but I have been doing it for long enough that my experience and self-confidence enable me to stand up to them. *And I use the words selectively; I stand up to them, not stand over them. I say to myself, 'OK Joshua, you're in charge here."* "You also have to have a good understanding of how to gain respect from children and some idea of how to not control children, but get the best out of children and I guess that takes a fair bit of self-confidence,"* adds Nerida.

"I agree, *I think you need a certain amount of confidence and a certain amount of authority to be able to manage the class*," says Cathy. "If you can't manage the class then*

they're not going to listen and they're going to get bored." "I've seen diminutive ladies really command a classroom of boys," laughs Bart*, "And I've seen big, boofy, loud men lose it and have no control at all.* It's not just a size thing or a personality thing. *It's something else."* "In the end, *good behaviour management* is important," says Stephen. "That way, *the students know that you're the teacher and you have the authority to discipline them so they don't disrupt other students."*

"You have to teach with love," adds Bart. *"That doesn't' mean you don't teach with boundaries or a management structure, but you have to do it with a smile and a lightness of heart because the consequences you can bring are not nearly as great as the school can bring." "I have such small classes,"* explains John, "that *I don't really need to do much classroom management. I only have them for half an hour, what's going to happen in half an hour?"* John pauses, and adds, *"apart from one kid getting up and whacking a kid over the head with a chair, which has only happened once or twice."* "Once or twice!" Shirley cries incredulously, and everyone laughs. John laughs, "maybe that's why I want a room *without any furniture impeding things, where we can move around and have lots of flexibility."*

"In a small classroom," explains Bart, *"you can get the majority of kids involved. But with thirty three kids, there is no room to do much. There is a loss of control because of the sheer volume that they are working at. It is hard to rein them in."* "It is important to *run a really tight ship so that they are quiet enough to hear what you are saying. If they are all mucking around and being stupid it becomes one big joke and even the good kids find it pretty frustrating because they can't be heard,"* says Nerida. "But *I don't* want to *rule with an iron fist,"* comments Lisa.

"We should spend time on the things we can control," says Avril. "Like establishing rules at the beginning of the year," says Avril. "I agree," says Nerida, "by starting out the year in that way, it's *fair for them, they know what's expected and they're not left guessing. It's also fair for us because we have to be able to have expectations that will be met*." "I agree, but I don't just do it at the beginning of the year," says Lisa. "*I start the first few weeks of every term by running through the rules. I only have two: please don't speak while I'm speaking because it's rude and people will miss out; and don't speak while your classmates are speaking because they want to be heard as well. That's basically all I have, and I reinforce that over a couple of weeks and I run through the consequences and they get it."* "I remind the *kids at the beginning of every lesson of how I want them to behave."* "There is never too much reminding of the rules," says Michelle. "*Remind them every time you come into the classroom, 'Why are you moving around? What is one of our rules?'"*

"If your rules are not rock solid, if your lines that you draw in the sand, if your management plan is wishy washy, they'll test them," says Bart. "*If they find they are wishy washy they know they have it all over you. I try to be firm but fair, I try not to display anger, although there have been times where I've let it out and pulled it straight back and said right that's the line and that's it. I'm not happy with your behaviour therefore we are going to stop here and we are going to deal with it now. And the kids go ok we've crossed the line."* "I'm

probably short and sharp when there is misbehaviour," says Shirley. "*And then I immediately try to say something or do something that shows that I don't bear any grudges. I certainly don't tolerate bad behaviour and they know it. But I'm very quick to show that I've forgotten it.*" "*I don't, as an SRE teacher, want to be angry because when you're angry it sends the wrong message,*" says Ruby.

"I think that for SRE to work," says John, "*you always have to have an incentive for them. Everything I do is based on a self-centred incentive. Like, you'll be the first to start the game off, or the one to turn the page, or something else.*" "You're right, John," agrees Michelle, "when I first started teaching SRE and training other teachers I tried to show the teachers that there are *ways to change kids' behaviour that don't involve extrinsic rewards. But I changed, now I think the best method of discipline in the half hour that we have is to use rewards.*" "*I want kids to learn for the love of it, but a few years ago* when *I had a class of fifty kids,*" says Nerida, "*I had to use things like stickers and methods that I'm not that keen on.*" "*I have a positive reinforcement system for good behaviour,*" says Ruby. "*It might be stickers or a lucky dip that I give to the person who has the best behaviour, or most improved from last week, or first completed the activity. Some people see it as bribery.*"

"Bribery or rewards, I guess we do it because we want the children *to have a clear knowledge of who Jesus is and that God loves them and what that really means,*" says Nerida. "*And at least to have been introduced to the idea that there is more to life; that there is eternity that they will have to make a decision about. Whether they make that decision now or later I don't have any control of that,* but *if they can go away knowing that God loves them and it's up to them, not their parents, not anyone else to decide they are going to live for him.*" "And y*et it's up to God, isn't it?*" asks Pearl. "*I throw the seed but God does the work.*" She flicks through her bible and reads from 1 Corinthians 3:6-10:

> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. [7] So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. [8] The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labour. [9] For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building. [10] By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.

"God *is my constant source of help and my inspiration,*" explains Nicole. "*There are thoughts that come to my mind. And I know that they are not my ideas. I struggle, when I am trying to do it in my own strength. And then all of a sudden something will come into my mind and I will know that it's God. I remember having an inspiration right at the last minute about having a lesson on carrying around hurts and rejections. I thought 'how am I going to get this across?' At the last minute God said 'get some rocks and time them up with a string'.* Another time *God said 'just get the costumes from church, a vest for the shepherd and three blankets'. A couple of years ago I was trying to think of a way to present the story in a fun way with dress ups and stuff. I felt God say 'gather them on the floor and read to them from the Bible'.*"

"*I* also *have a real sense that God gives me creative ideas and even creative questions* when I'm preparing the lesson," says Pearl. "Sometimes He changes the lesson I have prepared," laughs Jane. "What a challenge! *I've just sweated and prepared this lesson and I know this is what I am going to do,* but God has different plans. Although I follow my lesson plan, the *Holy Spirit is moveable so things can change course.*" "But preparation is important, isn't it?" says Pearl. "*If you're well prepared* the lesson *flows well and you don't have to refer to your notes. You also give God more freedom because if you're not focused on what to say next, you can let it flow.*"

"Teaching SRE and staying in touch with God through prayer go hand in hand," says Beth. "*I pray that* in my lessons, *the Lord will give the children ears to hear and eyes to see; that they'll be drawn to Him and they'll want to find out more about Him.*" "*I have to pray about SRE every week,*" says Nerida. "*I can prepare a whizz bang lesson, and it might be great, but if God is not in it, or if I haven't included God in the process, then He will do what He wants with it.*" "*There are times when I feel underprepared and I'll be driving to work praying 'God you've just go to make this work today, in my weakness, show yourself strong',*" says Pearl. "*I'm sure that the ideal in my heart is that yes the Holy Spirit has the central role* in my lessons. *Sometimes I have to have faith and trust that even if I'm not fully prepared or I've yelled at my kids; God can still use His word, it's still his Holy Spirit that can touch those kids' hearts. At the end of the day it is only the Holy Spirit that can, I can just pray that God is doing his work in these kids' hearts and that's why I'm there.*" "That's why *I pray at the beginning* of the lesson, that we *can quieten ourselves and give our time to God. It's a courtesy of acknowledging that God is the one in control,*" says Jane.

"I also pray for the children in my own time," says Patricia. "For example, *yesterday, as usual, I felt very apprehensive and nervous before the lesson and spent lots of time praying for the kids' response to my lesson. I felt that I taught well and that the kids were really able to grasp the concept.*" "It is so important to be prayerful," says Lisa, "I try to pray for each student before I get there. *The days when I'm short of time and I'm racing there saying, 'please Lord, make them be willing to listen and make their behaviour good,'* are usually the days when the lessons aren't very effective." "And I pray for God *to draw my attention to anyone who needs extra attention or a little chat,*" says Beth.

"It is important *not to take the attitude that I'm the religious teacher and I know everything,*" says Michelle. "*When the kids ask me some complicated question, I say 'I don't know I'll have to go and ask my minister, and let you know next week'.*" "I do the same," says Shirley. "If I don't know the answer to one of their questions *I am honest about that and if it's something I can find out about, I do. This is important because we can't be seen to be God ourselves.*" "*I get the impression that* there *a lot of our SRE teachers,*" continues Michelle, "who think that *because they have this teacher status, they have to be this authority figure that is never wrong. But if I'm talking about sin I always say, 'you're never going to believe this, I cheated on the golf course, but I fixed it up', that kind of stuff, and you'll see them looking at you. I don't make an issue about it, but just showing that there is a degree of humanness about me, I'm not this entity that's sanctimoniously attached to the church and*

divorced from the school; I'm like all the other classroom teachers but my thing is Christianity." "That's why I always have the Bible on my knee when I teach," explains Jane. "I run the risk that it becomes all about me. I'm the teacher, I'm telling the story, and I'm engaging with them. But I say 'This is not Jane, this is the Bible'. My authority is the Bible is really what I try to bring home to them."

Appendix 6.2 The construction of *Vulnerability and Authority* as a conceptual category

Conceptual category	Vulnerability and Authority	
Categories	Being called by God Managing the learning environment Managing the students	
Focused codes	Assessing their learning Being a volunteer Being a witness Being called Being more than a job Being part of a community Being used by God Controlling the class Dealing with challenges	Dealing with questions Dealing with difficult kids Developing a relationship with the school Establishing a learning environment Having a classroom teacher in the room Having enough time Increasing confidence Knowing names Wanting to give up
Initial codes; for example:	Being an outsider Being called Being judged Feeling discouraged when things aren't going well Having authority in the classroom Stepping in with heart in my mouth	

Appendix 7.1 *Truth and Hope* conversation

"I think it' really important for kids to know there's someone out there who's big and strong and powerful, who loves them and has got a good plan for them; that *God is always there for them, He can help them and He wants to relate to them and talk to them,"* says Nicole. Eleanor adds her ideas, *"I hope they recognise Jesus as a person who loves and cares for them and who is alive."* "And they know," says Patricia, *"that the bible is there and approachable, that Jesus is worth finding about, that prayer is a normal thing to do and that the church is not just about robes and fragrances and candles..."* *"I'm hoping,"* says Nicole, *"that in this big world where there are so many worries, and the kids are worried; that they can grasp there is something beyond all that. There is a God who is in control, who is a loving God who has their best interest at heart. That there is hope and peace."*

"I believe that *God's word is the truth,"* says Stephen*." That is what the kids need to hear – the strength of the gospel.* I believe *in God's word that can transform."* "You're right," says Nicole, "I love *knowing that I am making an impact in a child's life. I see it from time to time* when children's *faces light up as they see a truth in the bible."* *"I can offer students fascinating pieces of information and never offer them something that is gospel truth. Offering gospel truth comes back to the bible, because the bible is truth,"* says Patricia. "And it's powerful," adds Shirley, "which motivates me to help the children to memorise bible verses. *An apt memory verse can have a role, not just in that lesson, but on the rest of their life. I think it is important to choose verses that are succinct and memorable and important to a person's soul, and not just their knowledge of God. When they need to call on God, this verse will be in their memory and the Holy Spirit will be able to draw on it."*

"I like the challenge of finding different ways of trying to impart God's word," explains Nicole. *"Ways that are interesting and yet informative so that they are getting real gems of God's word in a package that they can understand and enjoy receiving."* "I *want to give them the truth and show them what is in the bible,"* says Patricia. "I believe that *God's word is the truth,"* states Stephen, "and *that is what kids need to hear. The way a person is changed is through the work of God's spirit through His word. That is what brings lasting and eternal change. So wanting to make sure God's word is central to an SRE lesson is critically important*." "That's why *there has to be something in the lesson that is really bible focused,"* adds Patricia.

"I'd love to have bibles in the classroom. But it is hard work carrying a crate of twenty five bibles to class every week," says Lisa. "Like you, I want to teach directly from the bible because *it is more powerful than anything I can say,"* says Patricia, "but I don't have a class set in the room." "I don't either," says John, "and I can't be bothered carrying them in every week because they're heavy." "And if you do have them, *just to hand them out and look up a verse can take fifteen minutes,"* says Alicia.

"A school principal once told me, *we must never forget the power of stories and storytelling.* She wasn't talking about bible stories, *but it can be applied to biblical stories,"*

says Shirley. "*For me, the story is the main gist of the lesson,*" says Pearl. "*The kids love it, I love it. It's what will stick in their minds. If the story goes well and it's engaging, if they understand and are able to respond to the questions afterwards I feel like I am communicating well* and it will stick in their minds. *That's the key for me.*" "I agree with you*,*" says Bart, "*everybody loves a good story. Jesus definitely used stories; stories are abundant in the bible.*"

"I think of storytelling as *preaching three dimensionally,*" says Joshua. "That is, *I make the stories real for them. I act them out and project my voice.*" "*I suppose I tend to use my body and the tone of my voice. I have the bible with me and I will start with the bible,*" says Jane. Shirley laughs as she says, "recently in an attempt to involve the children in the story, I got them to repeat words from the story after me. *They were attentive, and obligingly repeated words like synagogue and Capernaum after me when it must have bored them silly*".

"Before I start a story," says Pearl, "*I say, 'you need to listen because I'm going to ask you questions after the story'.* Then at the end of the story I'll ask '*what do we learn from this story about God or the bible or faith.*" "*I ask questions right through the story,*" says Shirley, "so that *there is constant reinforcing* of what I'm teaching." "*There's been times when I could hear a pin drop and I know I've got them. And other times I'm fighting to ask a question to see if they've understood,*" explains Pearl. She pauses for a moment and asks, "*isn't it great when there's a buzz of enthusiasm after the story?*"

"We need to *push past the story to a deeper level. Pushing beyond* telling them what the story says *to asking what does it mean? Why is it in the bible? Why would we believe that? I think if I can get to that deeper level, that for me says that* the children *are engaging with it and understanding it,*" says Elissa. "I know what you mean," says Jane. "When I told the story of the Prodigal Son, *I was a little bit surprised about their answers about who God is. I had to push and push and push, until one girl said, 'Oh we have to be sorry'.* "Going deeper is *about getting kids thinking and connecting with their own world,*" says John. "*When you tell them something about Jesus, about God and the bible; they'll think about it, they'll work out what it means and start to work out ways of applying it.*"

"*I think the key to it is finding out what is it* the *kids want to talk about rather than assuming that's what they want to talk about,*" says Michelle. "*We should be encouraging more discussion.*" "If you could *just become the chair,*" says Bart, "*and if there was a high level of tolerance and kids took their turn, you'd have a discussion. But when there are kids calling out, other kids are losing the plot, and you've got different learning levels; discussion can be quite limited because half of them can't hear the answers anyway.*"

"*Ideally, at the end of the lesson there should be an activity that consolidates what they've been learning; something that allows them to express it in some way,*" says Nerida. *But realistically, that's not likely to happen. Most of the time, I don't even get through everything I've planned.*" "*Those times of reflection and prayer at the end of the lesson are the key times when God can be working in the hearts of the kids. I have to stop what I'm*

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doing and give God space," says Pearl. "When I'm *seriously running out of time, I'll talk about what's in the Student Books, I'll hold one up in front of them, but we won't do it,"* says Beth." Me too," says Patricia. "*I'll sum up what we've learned to fit into the time we have.*" "*It's the way the lessons are written,"* says Michelle. "*Every lesson has a beginning and an end; and you have to end it because next week there's a new lesson to be taught, it's a new thing. We get to the* beginning of the next lesson *and we say 'now who can remember anything from last lesson? And no one can remember and it suddenly dawns on me* that *I must have given a crap lesson, because no one can remember. So I need to stop and go back. Really I've stopped and done the lesson again because I'm not satisfied that there is any point in going on. I don't tell people I've done it* because we're expected just to move onto the next lesson. But if I do that *it just becomes a series of one night or one day performances."* Nerida laughs, "that's why teaching SRE *is a bit like pulling a rabbit out of a hat every week."*

"You're right Michelle, *week after week, I ask the children what they remember from the week before, but they don't remember,"* says Joshua. "You know," says Elissa slowly, "looking back over my year teaching year six, *I kind of felt like it was a bit of a non-event. Yes, I got an opportunity to go in there, but I didn't have much of an impact on them. I got through the year and they got through the year, but I don't actually know what they learned."* "*On the whole,"* says Pearl, "*I feel like I'm not having an impact or doing much good."* Lisa nods and quietly adds, "*I had a beautiful class last year, but now I wonder, were they just being a beautiful class or were they actually learning? There's no way to measure without doing a test, and who wants to sit a test?"* "At least with my kindergarten class," says Elissa, "*I knew that* they *had learned something because I knew where they started. I knew they knew nothing. I did a little chant that was the four phrases that I thought were the four most important things, and we did that for the whole year. So* by the end *they knew those four things: God made us, God knows us, God loves us and God came to visit us."* "I think that we just have to *try and slow down and not be so worried about what we get through* in the books," says Nicole.

"But I feel safe teaching tightly to the curriculum," says Alicia. "And I like that there are enough suggestions in the Teacher Books that we can always have a good discussion," says Bart. "Besides, *there are times when I'm at my wit's end and having a book reduces my preparation time.*" "I like the Teacher Books as well," says Daniel. "I like how they are well thought out and give me helpful teaching tips. *The lesson plan is there if you want to use it and it gives you a few ways to teach it. It's really left up to you, and I like that too.*"

"But the Teacher Books are just too exhausting," says Michelle. "They are *just too complicated and time consuming and too useless for the amount of time and effort that is put into writing them. They are just not a teaching and learning practice that I've ever considered doing. There's nothing to build on; no cognitive development and for the kids in years five and six, they are as boring as all get out."* "And the Student Books are *a distraction.* When the children use the books *they are going ahead or back and doing those mindless word games."* Shirley says. "Word games," Michelle declares derisively, "I don't

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want them doing word games. They're *just a bit of fun, they take up ten minutes of our time. I think there needs to be more opportunities in* years five and six *for them to express and for us to read it and hear what they are saying.*" "I want the students to get *a piece of truth* from the lessons *rather than that cool puzzle* in the books," says Patricia.

"We have to get the kids "involved and engaged in the lesson," explains Bart. "It takes a lot of preparation and having a good relationship with the children," says Nerida. "And I know it's happening when *they answer questions, there's a level of keenness, the swiftness they put up their hands, and some of them are calling out,"* adds Bart. "It's when the class is *not really noisy, but not really quiet; every student is interested and working together; one student asks a questions and every student wants to answer,"* says Patricia. "And *I love it when the students are working in groups with each other and discussing things." "It's basically the amount of hands that go up and the questions that are asked,* that helps me know the children are engaged," says Eleanor.

"I look for enthusiasm, even if they're not remembering. I ask myself, *'can they finish the bible quote, can they fill in the gaps if I ask certain questions?'"* says Beth. "I hope you don't mind me saying this Beth, but I think our questions need to be a bit more open ended than that," says Michelle; "*I think* we need to be *asking open enough questions that* we *allow* the *kids to pose the problem back without being restricted by what we are aiming to do,* and not just getting them to fill the gaps." "Actually," Beth pauses and responds "there was one day when I went to class with *wonderful questions to ask the children. As I taught, I thought 'wow', I've never taught like that before."*

"Sometimes, and too few times to be encouraging," says Alicia, "*you feel like the kids give an honest answer to a question. They give their opinions and they say can we do such and such. There isn't the time for those kinds of honest discussions. And also you've got the classroom issues of so many children in the class so you'll always have a kid who's mucking around. There'll always be facetious answers that will throw that.* But I do want to talk about real things and real challenges with the children so that they *realise that I don't have all the answers. Somehow we have to communicate that faith is a way of living rather than a single answer* to a simple question. *I think that all too often,"* continues Alicia thoughtfully, "*teachers take a correct answer or discussion contribution by one student as an indication that the whole class has got the point, but I don't think we can do this. The best it gives is another opportunity for other students to re-hear the point being made."*

"Sometimes the best lessons happen when the questions come from the children and you just totally divert for about five or ten minutes because they are just asking so many amazing questions," says Eleanor. "I've done the same thing," says Daniel. "*I've stopped the lesson and been at their behest, and let the questions flow." "That's why I encourage the children to ask lots of questions," says Alicia. "They come up with *really good questions and they genuinely want to know,"* says Ruby. A few teachers nod as she continues, "it's important to *affirm their questions and make a positive learning environment for them.*"

"Kids will ask the *hard questions*, if they are confident that we *won't shy away from them,"* says Bart.

"*If a good and curly question comes along, you have to decide am I going to deal with this and make this into my lesson,"* says Bart. "I find this difficult because I have tasks that need to be completed and *I don't want to have my agenda overridden,"* says Ruby. "Sometimes lessons *don't go according to plan at all,"* says Lisa. "*I have spent the time preparing this OK lesson, but it gets shelved* because the *kids just ask great questions about who God is and why does He love us.* "Whenever I get questions that are genuinely searching, I'll usually stop and make way, maybe abandon one of the activities,"* says Bart. "There'd have to be *a good reason to steam roll over the top of that.* You know, *I go the whole year working towards the times when I actually drop my lesson plan and answer their questions. That's actually the pinnacle."* "But you do need to be careful," warns Beth. "*You can be side-tracked in a good way or dragged away from the main point."* Stephen adds, "But *you have to work out is it a red herring because the kid is quite negative or is it a serious question."* "Like Stephen," says Alicia, "when the students ask a question, *I try to sus where the students are coming from and why they are asking. I try to throw it back to them and question them to find out their thinking and where the questions are coming from. Then I attempt to handle it as best I can from what I know from the bible."* "I will *take questions seriously*, as long as the *questions are genuinely searching*," says Bart. "*If a child comes out with an interesting question you have to decide: do I spend five minutes on this question and hope it's interesting for the rest of the kids as well. Or am I going to fob the child off and hope that I can give them a ten second answer,"* says Alicia.

"*Of course,"* laughs Nerida, "answering their questions can backfire on you. I remember a time when a new girl came to SRE. *She was just filled with questions, amazing questions, 'How big is God? Does he fit in this room? She dominated the lesson with really profound questions. So I just answered them as best I could.'* That night over dinner the girl told her parents that God was bigger than the universe. *Her parents were livid that she had gone to SRE and they had an interview with the teacher and said the girl was never to go to SRE again.'* "Oh boy that was a big mistake," says Patricia and everyone laughs. "But later," continues Nerida, "I met the family in a playground after the girl came over and said hello to me. *We were having this normal little moment, it was just this little moment that I thought, 'hopefully this will help'. That was just God working. I think she was a bright girl with atheist parents and I hope that she uses her brightness to find out. You just hope they'll remember content, and they'll remember where to find out when it come up later in life."*

"I ask the children to write their questions down," says Lisa. "*Every time I give out the* Student Books *I also give each child a coloured piece of paper. I say, 'If you have any questions about God or church or anything about that, please write it down.' Then I devote one lesson a term to questions."* "I get them to write their questions down as well," says Joshua. "*I've done that on and off for years.* They ask things like *does God sit on clouds? Is He married*? "Don't the same questions come up over and over again?" notes Eleanor. "Questions like *who created God? When did God begin*?" "Whatever the question," says

Joshua, "when I answer, I want them to *realise that God is involved in all the questions that they are asking me.*"

"Whenever they ask a question, *I throw it back to them. It's not about them asking a question and me giving the answer. I want them to think*," explains Lisa. "*I will try really hard if a kid asks a good question to throw it back to the whole group* too," says Bart, "Before I trained as a teacher," says Lisa, "*I might just have given an answer. And I need to catch myself because there is so much I'd love to share with them. But first I want them to think. Then I say 'OK, this is what the bible tells me when I read it'.*"

"As long as the *lesson is engaging and there's participation and fun*" says Lisa, "the children will *really enjoy it.*" "*But you can't just have a fun SRE lesson: you have to make sure you are teaching.* I never want the games to overtake the quality of what I am saying" says Renee. "All the same, *the more participation I have in that half an hour, the more they will actually take away from the lesson*," says Alicia. "*The important thing is to know your subject well and be ready to deliver it in a couple of different ways,*" says Daniel. "And to do this in an engaging manner," says Alicia. "Students are *really engaged when they are hearing what I said and thinking what the implication of that is. And they're not just giving you the answer they think I want.*"

"We engage children when we help them to *ground what they are learning in real life* so that they can *apply things to the world around them,*" says John. "I agree," says Bart, "I want to *bring relevance to SRE.* There was a woman in the news that attacked a dog owner after the dog attacked her. *We discussed who was in the wrong, and then I related it straight back to the lesson.*" "That kind of engagement means having a class where it's *not really noisy, but not really quiet;* where *every student is interested and working together; one student asks a question and every student want to answer,*" says Alicia. "*It's where the kids are *actually absorbing and responding. So it's not about sitting there silently, it's actually hearing the content, and processing it, and thinking about it, and then going, 'what does this mean?'*" "And don't you love it when one child puts up her hand, *then someone else puts up his hand, then someone else. It evolves from there, it just sort of happens,*" says Nicole.

"*I like that* in SRE *you get to chat to a bunch of kids about God, many of whom wouldn't have the opportunity to hear these things. Even if that's a seed that they come back to in twenty years' time, I pray that God will use it to bring them into the kingdom,*" says Patricia. "*Teaching SRE is about transformation,*" says Nicole, "and *transformation takes a long time.*" "When you teach SRE *you can't always see results; you can't know for certain until an adult comes up to you and says* SRE made a difference," says Bart "*It's definitely seed sowing.*" A choir of voices sing their agreement. Patricia continues, "*I always come back to the Parable of the Sower. I see these kids as good soil, and you can't plant the seed in any better soil than these kids' hearts.* It's *an act of faith because the seed goes in and I'm never going to see it. I might see some little shoots or some signs of it taking root, but it's going to take many years. My faith is that the word of God is a living seed, and there is power of life in that.*"

"*It's not up to me what these children are learning*," says Shirley, "*you might never see them again in the whole of your life, but you are sowing the seed. I hope and pray that it is a memorable experience and a pleasant experience* for them." "*I can't expect God to work in* the children's *hearts if* I'm *going to be heart-hearted,*" says Jane. "*As a conduit I hope the kids will be open to take in the truth even if it is not going to bear any fruit for many years. We're not important at one level; we want the gospel to penetrate their hearts. We plant seeds, they have to have that choice.*"

"*I hope,*" adds Eleanor quietly, "*That the seeds that have been planted will sometime come to harvest.*" "I do too," acknowledges Michelle, "But *it is a long term outcome, it's not necessarily going to be seen in the time that we are teaching them. My passion is there because I know who God is and how knowing God can save them a whole lot of pain and angst.*" "Some year six children told me that they didn't believe in God," says Joshua. "*I said, 'That's OK, you're free to believe, I'm not here to stuff it down your throats. We've told you the stories. OK, you don't believe, but keep an open mind.*" Nerida adds, "*you're right* about an open mind, Joshua. I want them to be introduced to the idea that there is *more to life; that there is eternity that they will have to make a decision about, whether they make that decision now or later, I don't have any control over that.*" Joshua continues, "*I do hope that they will go home to their parents and say, 'Mr B. said this'. So they are telling the good news to others. I hope they go home and say 'we heard the story of Jesus'*".

"*When I was a child,*" says Julia, "*we had this minister who used to come out once a month to a small out of town church and I used to go with my mum. He was animated and waved his arms and taked about Jesus. I had no clue what he was talking about, but I knew that what he believed, he fully believed. So I hope that even when they don't get it; they will remember that I did this.*" "It's like," Cathy stops and gathers her thoughts, "*y*ou're investing a year with them, but really you want to change their entire lives, you want to change their outlook on God.*" "I believe we're giving give them a *good foundation for exploring issues of faith further,*" says Pearl. "And *even if they don't understand it, but they've remembered the words; I've given them something they can use later,*" says Patricia. "*Our job is to make a nice foundation for when they go to youth group or meet adult Christians,*" explains Elissa. "*Then they can make a nice faith house that they can understand.*" "I'm not sure I know what you mean by a faith house," says Patricia. Elissa explains, "*I was just saying that it is important that we are making all these Christian ideas approachable so that students can…find out more outside of the classroom. This is because in the classroom there is not actually the time for students to really nut it out.*" "But it is important," says Pearl, "that *there is no sense that the children are being coerced,* instead they should be *given options and choices that they can pick up later on down the track.*"

"*SRE is about giving children an opportunity to understand what Christianity is about, it's not about me making them become a believer,*" says Michelle. "*I can't do that.*" "*Our role is an ongoing educational role,*" clarifies Shirley. "It's *placing God before them each week, but not bringing them to a decision* to follow Jesus, *but heading them towards a*

time that they can make a decision when it is appropriate for them." Alicia agrees, *"we are presenting God's word and letting the Holy Spirit do His work."* Eleanor speaks quietly and other teachers lean forward to hear her, *"we can't say, 'Look you need to believe in Jesus, 1,2,3 here we go.' We can just share stories about Jesus and the values He espoused and lived out and we try to follow, and hopefully a spark will start to catch."* "It's why being a seed sower is so important," says Patricia. "Sometimes *I realise* the children *are actually listening to me and they will take away something that they may never have known before even if that's a seed that they come back to in twenty years. I pray that God will use it to bring them into His kingdom."* "It's not an intellectual process; it's a spiritual thing that they're interacting with," says Nerida, "but *just exploring it just like you explore any other piece of information is where it all begins. They can weigh it up and in the end it is the Holy Spirit that changes people. People can have all the knowledge in the world but that doesn't necessarily mean they will become Christians. Conversion is a personal process".*

"I would really like the kids to have a good foundation for exploring issues of faith further and an acknowledgement that the bible is a valid source to go to find out more about God," says Pearl. *"I am there to teach the Scriptures clearly and truthfully,"* says Renee. "I suppose *my role is to teach the truth, not to make it a fairy tale."* "That's why *this year I have been challenging myself to present truth,"* says Patricia; "*sometimes this means the lessons aren't the whizz-bang wow lessons* that I used to teach. *But now the students leave knowing something new about the bible and Jesus."*

"I hope," concludes Beth, *"that they come out knowing they can talk to God. I'm often saying 'you can pray anytime, anywhere, anyhow'."* "And *I hope that they see what I am teaching I really believe. And that I do see Jesus as a friend and God. I hope they will remember something of what they have been taught,"* says Avril. "And they say, '*Mr J. helped me to find Jesus. And secondary to that, would be Mr J. made me want to find out more about Jesus,"* says Bart. "*That's my goal, that's why I'm there."*

Appendix 7.2 The construction of *Hope and Truth* as a conceptual category

Conceptual category	Truth		Hope	
Categories	Teaching the truth Using available resources		Engaging children with questions and stories Sowing seeds	
Focused codes	Assessing their learning Being different to classroom teaching Being flexible Building on previous learning Conflicting worldviews Dealing with politics Dealing with questions Having church kids Learning from other teachers	Planning and designing lessons Teaching about Easter Teaching difficult ideas Teaching the truth Teaching the unit Using bibles Using student books Using the available resources Using visuals Writing things down.	Asking questions Being creative Being relational Developing relationships with children Engaging kids Evangelising Having an opportunity to hear	Having fun Leading discussions Listening Recalling past teachers Slowing down Sowing seeds Storytelling Wanting to give up
Initial codes; for example:	Declaring the gospel so they can respond later Having faith later in life Giving kids a foundation for later Making wise choices later Respoding to God in their own time Sowng the seed Teaching for later			

The arrows in Appendix 7.1 illustrate the upward movement of the analytical process that led to the construction of the conceptual category of Truth and Hope. Initial codes representing an idea or experience that was common to different SRE teachers were grouped together. These groups were named and became the focused codes. For example, the initial codes that were grouped together to form the focused code "Having an opportunity to hear" were: (i) being given the opportunity to hear about God, (ii) being taught, (iii) children questioning faith, (iv) coming to school with no knowledge, (v) doing what's not being done at home, (vi) getting them to church, (vii) growing up in a Christian home, (viii) having Christianity in public schools, (ix) not coming from a Christian home, (x) not coming from Christian homes, (xi) not coming from church backgrounds, (xii) not hearing about God, (xiii) not hearing about Jesus in their own homes, (xiv) passing on the message, (xv) remembering what they are taught, (xvi) teaching in her flexi-time, (xvii) teaching the truth, and (xiii) telling children something they might not hear. These initial codes all relate to teaching children so that they can hear about the SRE teachers' faith. On first reading it may seem that "teaching in her flexi-time" does not seem to fit with the other initial codes in the focused code of "having an opportunity to hear". However, it is grouped with the other seventeen initial codes because it is a code that describes how Julia makes time in her fulltime job to give children the opportunity to hear about Jesus. This is a good example of how it is not the name of the initial code that determines what focused code it is grouped with. Rather it is the data that the initial code represents that determines its placement within a particular focused code.

Appendix 8.1 Relational Teaching Conversation

"When I first started teaching, I wanted to *go in and be their peer,* but *what they need is a teacher,"* says Elissa. *"I still would want that* I could be their peer, *but in school I don't think they are ready for that."* "I think you've got something there," says Stephen. *"I'm not there to be their friend, but I'm there to love them within the boundaries of a teacher/student relationship."* "I'm not their friend I know that," says Lisa, *"but I want to be a loving teacher to them, I want to be a loving influence in their life because some of these kids, you don't know this* might be one of the only *times when they are cared for and loved. I tell them I pray for them each week and they go 'what?'* I tell them that *'you guys matter to me and you matter to God'."*

"I had a great class one year, but another teacher's husband got sick and she had to stop teaching," explains Lisa. *"I didn't want those kids to miss out on SRE so I asked them into my class. That was really hard going. I didn't have any rapport with them and it took me the rest of the year to build it up."* Lisa pauses to think for a moment, *"I don't think I did the right thing. I did a great disservice to my existing class. I would make a very different decision given the circumstances again."* *"My role is different to* a classroom teacher's; *it has a pastoral aspect to it. I have the luxury of meeting kids in a way that might be akin to a sporting coach,"* says Bart. *"I think showing that you're real, and you can laugh with the kids and be a bit more relaxed than the* classroom *teacher* is important,*"* says Renee. *"You need to be real and not grumpy."*

"The problem is," says Eleanor, "that *I only have half an hour. I burst into the room and I don't have the opportunity for forming long, in depth relationships with the children. It's a short burst thing."* *"When you're coming in for SRE you can build a relationship, but it's for twenty minutes or half an hour each week and so it's much more distant than a classroom teacher. So on a relational level it's just so different,"* says Nerida. "It is *a really weird situation to be in. But although you're only coming in for such a short time each week you do develop a relationship because of the nature of what you are teaching. You immediately step into something that is really intimate."* "SRE *is not just a job, doing a lesson and coming out again,"* explains Jane. *"I care for the kids and I want them to know about Jesus. I fundamentally believe that building a relationship with the kids and any difficult children is also going to help delivering the lesson."*

"I agree with you Jane," says Stephen, "but I think we also have to build our relationship with God. *What is absolutely critical is that I'm growing in godliness and that I'm an SRE teacher who lives this truth out. Another teacher can be in the school and say you need to care for the other students but be a terrible husband and father and still do his job well, but for the SRE teacher they need to go hand in hand."* "That's it," says Lisa. *"You need to be walking right with God yourself. There is a lot to be said for walking with God, it's more about us and our relationship with God and looking for what God wants us to say to the kids, not what the material says."* "I want my students *to say that I listen to them and that I care about what they have to say,"* says Patricia. *"I think that's the* more *important*

than being *really interesting or* telling them *about new things. That I care about students and listen to what they say. Potentially the thing that makes them more inclined to investigate Christianity is that the person who taught them SRE genuinely wanted to hear what they wanted to say".*

"*I try to be fair dinkum and take genuine questions seriously,*" says Bart. "*I think you are far more effective if you are fair dinkum and willing to be vulnerable* by showing *an insight of yourself. There were days when I felt rubbish and I said to them, "I feel rubbish"* It's important to *reveal some of the things that you are into. I think that teachers who try to put a screen between themselves and the kids are probably doing everyone a disservice.*" "I agree," says Nicole. "*I have to allow my personality and who I am to come out more, because that's what the kids relate to. And who I am is that connection between relating God to the children. Because it is the Holy Spirit working through me that the kids see.*" "I think that my emphasis on a personal relationship with God *translates* into how I teach," says Nerida. "*I am much more anecdotal in the way that I present the stories of the bible and try and relate them to kids' experiences because in my own faith it's personal. So I try and explain things in a way that is relevant to them in their daily lives.*"

"Relationships with the kids are so important. It's why *I walk through the playground at lunchtime and say hello. It show that you care.*" says Ruby. "Then at the beginning of each lesson *I do either a news slot or an interview slot* so that we're *actually hearing from one, two or three* of them *to hear what's going on in their lives. So they know it's a relationship.*" "I think it is possible *to nurse our curriculum in a way that allows us to spend time getting to know them,*" explains Stephen. "*So that hopefully over time they will see that we do care about them and what happens in their lives*". "*I used to have classes over recess, and I'd go out into the playground and children would come up to me and chat,*" says Eleanor. "*Not all deep and meaningful, just to come up and relate. Children like to relate and tell their story.*" "*If kids want to hang around after school,*" says Michelle, " *they come up and ask me something, and because they are in grades five and six I know they are not catching a bus or something, so I can spend some time just having a chat with them if that's what they want to do. They say 'can you clarify this', or 'what do you think this means', or 'has something like that happened to you?' or sometimes they ask 'how long have you been playing golf, how many kids have you got?' or 'my dad said you used to teach him and says to say hello'.*" "I recently met the mother of two of my students and commiserated with her on the death of her mother. I knew about it because her son had prayed about it in SRE. *She nearly cried because she was touched that one of her sons has noticed her sorrow and had prayed for her,*" says John.

"Developing relationships with the children is *all about winning their respect,*" says Daniel. "And we do that by *being honest, answering all their questions, remembering their names and keeping our promises.*" "But *even just remembering their names,*" Ruby pauses and counts off her classes on her fingers, "*I have over two hundred and fifty children a week* so it's impossible.*" "It's* about *spending a bit of time very early on,*" says Jane, "and *getting to know them as we're going to get to know Jesus and God. But I explain that 'first I want to*

get to know you and all about you', and that helps overall." "It is so important to remember their names for classroom management," says Pearl. "But it is also important because *I'm telling the kids that God knows and loves and cares for them so much that He knows the number of hairs on their heads. So,"* she shrugs her shoulders, *"if I can't get their names right…"* *"Names are important,"* says Jane. *"God is relational and we want to be relational too. I don't want to be in a crowd of people that I've met five times before and have them not know my name. Nor do I want to be singled out, overlooked or just part of the crowd, s*o I don't want that for these children." "Jesus is the guide here," says John. "He *gets the little children and He tells the disciples not to hinder them, but to let them come to Him*[50].*"*

"*I want to slow down and get to know the kids better,"* says Nicole, "k*now their names."* "The older I get," confesses Jane, "the more I struggle with this. *I spend time early on learning their names. I tell them I have trouble with pronunciation and I will need help with their names."* *"If I can,"* says Joshua, *"I use their name, but if I can't remember it I just point."* "The trouble is, they know when you don't know their names," adds Avril. "*I said to one girl, 'you have lovely manners' and she said, 'you don't remember my name, do you?'* It didn't help our relationship." "I work hard at learning their names;" says Pearl, "*because I find once I remember their names my classroom rapport is much better*." "*Having so many kids* means *you can't really know all their names,"* says Bart. *"So you get to know the naughty ones first and you get to know a few of the others." "I try really hard to attend to every kid in SRE, it's important to include everyone and to make them realise you care about them and that you know their names,"* says Patricia. "But *I find that really hard* because *I don't have a class list and there still kids I don't know after six weeks of teaching."*

"There are some hungry little hearts that need to know they are special and they are loved," says Nicole. "I'm not going to *give up on them. I had one boy, he was so funny* and *was really very, very naughty. He'd hide under the teacher's desk to get out of SRE. All through the years he'd say "there's no God, can you prove there's a God?" And I'd say 'I can't prove it but I have a relationship with this God and you need to discover this for yourself'. When he left for high school he'd pass where I worked every day. He'd say, 'I know there's no God'. I gave him a bible in year six. He took great pleasure in telling me that he burnt his. He even abused me once. But over the years he would come to me; he was so knowledgeable about the bible as he tried to prove me wrong. He'd go onto the internet to compare Christianity to other religions. Finally, he went off and joined the army and I haven't heard from him since."*

Jane chuckles and says, "I have a little fellow in my class. *He is so naughty. He pulls faces and he sits with his back to me and pretends he is the teacher.* But yesterday, he was so

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[50] Mark 10:13-16 [13] People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. [14] When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. [15] Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." [16] And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.

good. *And I said, "Charlie, I'm going to give you a merit card today because you listened so well during the story. And I want to apologise to you because I pick on you every week, but today you are so lovely". To have apologised to him, I can't believe I did that! But he was so glad."* "I have some connection with prison ministries. I hear the sort of things that happen to families through the stresses of unemployment and drugs. *That gives me empathy for the sea of faces that* I teach," says Eleanor. "I teach some children that *I just know have awful lives*," says Julia. "*They come in like Orphan Annies. One little girl wears boots that are too big for her; she's got these big boots on these little legs.* It's important to have a softness and not be judgmental."

Appendix 8.2 The construction of *Relational Teaching* as a conceptual category.

Conceptual category	Relational Teaching	
Categories	Developing relationships with children Engaging and managing the students Walking with God	
Focused codes	Being part of the community Being a witness Being real Being relational Being used by God Dealing with difficult kids Developing relationships with children	Having a relationship with God Having enough time Knowing names Praying Seeing God's power Seeing the Holy Spirit working Walking with God
Initial codes; for example:	Being transparent Being human Building rapport Building relationships Having integrity Having a godly character	

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