Title : Investigating the meaning and function of prayer for children in selected primary schools in Melbourne Australia

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Statement of Sources

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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ABSTRACT

**Investigating the meaning and function of prayer
for children in selected primary schools in Melbourne Australia**

Prayer is a central element of all religions (Coleman, 1999; Engebretson, 1999). Alongside the sense of the theological importance of prayer there has been increased recognition of the psychological function and personal benefit of prayer for adults (Pargament, 1997). This thesis reports on research that investigated the theological and psychological perceptions of prayer held by children, shown through their understanding of the meaning and function of prayer.

This thesis contributes to the research field of children's spirituality. As there is little existing research literature on children and prayer, the findings of this study provide valuable new understanding and propose new aspects of theory with implication for professionals involved in the education and the welfare of children. The research reported in this thesis represents the first Australian research on children's perception of the meaning and function of prayer.

The choice of participants reflects the diverse philosophical and religious traditions found in the Australian, multifaith society. Semi-structured interviews were video-recorded with 60 participants from primary school Year Five (10-12 years). Five male and five female participants were selected from each of six different schools in the Melbourne metropolitan area. These were: the Catholic, Independent (Christian), Christian (Parent-Controlled or Community School), Jewish, Islamic and the Government schools. Students completed a drawing exercise and a written sentence completion exercise as part of the interview, and the three sources of data were analysed qualitatively

using the method of Grounded Theory. The data was interpreted in the light of a detailed literature review on the nature and function of prayer as part of children's spirituality. The review also examined relevant sections of the literature of religious education and literature on contemporary Australian life.

This study has provided Australian data on the meaning and function of prayer for children as part of children's spirituality. Considerable agreement has been observed through the data, between children educated in a variety of school systems which embraced different philosophical and faith traditions. In the multicultural Australian community said to be secularized, prayer for these children has been shown as a valued aspect of life. The personal experiences of prayer for many were seen to be associated with the community of faith to which the participants belonged, and for others, prayer was learnt eclectically and practised in a private individualistic manner. All participants indicated that they had prayed and all contributed ideas about prayer through the interviews. All participants perceived prayer to function as an aid in life. Prayer was used by participants at significant moments in their life, and the words or thoughts in prayer helped to clarify and articulate deep feelings. Eight elements of theory (in accord with the literature on Grounded Theory) have been generated through this research which are presented as recommendations for professionals engaged in religious education and student welfare.

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Abbreviations
School codes

CaS - Catholic school- A Christian school of the Roman Catholic tradition attached to a suburban parish church. This is a coeducational, fee paying school with financial subsidy from the Roman Catholic Church.

CS - Christian School – A Christian community or parent-controlled school attached to a Pentecostal worship centre. This is a coeducational, fee paying school, with financial subsidy from the church community.

GS – Government school – A suburban school funded by the government. This is a non-fee paying school, coeducational school.

IS – Independent school – A school established by a Christian protestant denomination. This is a fee paying, coeducational school.

JS – Jewish school – This school has been established to educate children in the Orthodox Jewish tradition. This is a coeducational, fee paying school, with financial subsidy from the Jewish community.

MS – Muslim school- This school has been established to educate children in the Islamic tradition. This is a coeducational fee paying school with financial subsidized from the Islamic community.

Student codes

G –Female participant – the number following the G records the interview order

B – Male participant – the number following the B records the interview order

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

**Investigating the meaning and function of prayer
for children in selected primary schools in Melbourne Australia**

Background to the Study

Prayer is a central element of all religions (Coleman, 1999; Engebretson, 1999).

Christian writers identify prayer as a sign of what Brueggemann calls the "hopeful

imagination" of humans (Brueggemann, 1986b) which is connected to the theological

images of the revelation of a God who cares (Foster, 1992; Rahner, 1958).   For

Christians this is the God identified as "Abba" by Jesus (Foster, 1992; Soares-Prabhu,

1990).   In the Jewish tradition, prayer is "an expression of man's constant awareness of

the divine" (Cohn & Fisch, 1996, p.vii).   There is in prayer a sense of connection with

the God of history, and a continuation of the act of sacrifice (Donin, 1980).   In Islam

prayer is considered a "foundation of religion" (Abdalati, 1996 p.55), showing

"submission" as central to the spirit of worship (Abul ala Maududi, 1982 p. 129).

Alongside the sense of the theological importance of prayer there has been

increased recognition of the psychological reality and benefit of prayer for adults (Godin,

1968; T. Moore, 1992; Pargament, 1997; Ulanov & Ulanov, 1982).   For all religious

traditions the personal involvement in the act of prayer is regarded as an "effort to

enhance life" (Wulff, 1997 p. 545)

This thesis reports on research that investigated the perceptions of prayer held by

children showing the psychological and theological dimensions of what prayer meant to

them.   The participants were primary school children who attended a range of schools in

Melbourne, Australia.   While there have been studies concerned with prayer among

adults (Pargament, 1997), there has been little academic attention given to the subject of children and prayer.

<div align="center">*Place of this Research within the Literature*</div>

The research reported in this thesis is connected with and derives significance from a number of areas of academic theory and research. These areas include the development of children's spirituality, religious education, education for resilience and religious psychology.

The Development of Children's Spirituality

The report to UNESCO of the *International Commission on Education for the Twenty First Century* (Delors, 1996), considered education as necessary for the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice. The UNESCO report (1996) identified four guiding principles of education-"to know, to do, to live together, to be" (p. 94). The report recognised that with an increasingly crowded planet and world-wide communication, there is need for further social cohesion and democratic participation. In this regard, human development must be emphasised as an aim of education, rather than the current emphasis on economic growth. Many areas of tensions were identified. These included the tensions between global and local educational initiatives, the valuing of tradition and the valuing of the modern, competition and equality of opportunity, expansion of knowledge and the capacity to assimilate it and finally the tension between the material and the spiritual aspects of life. For the writers of the UNESCO report (1996), the spiritual dimension, with an emphasis on the moral and cultural aspects of life, was to be valued in meeting the goals of learning "to live together" and learning "to be".

As well as these guidelines for education in the twenty-first century, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* in Article 29 stated that the development of children's spirituality was a right.   In this article, each child was said to have a right to a standard of living which was "adequate for physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development" (United Nations*www.unhchr.ch/htm/menu3/b/k2crc.htm*, 2004).

Other research such as the work of Coles (1986; 1990), Hay (1998) and Hart (2003), showed the level of current interest in the nurture and development of spirituality. Little research has been done to investigate prayer as a particular part of spirituality for children.   Therefore the research reported in this thesis adds to and extends contemporary understanding in the area of children's spirituality.

Religious Education

As O Murchu (1997) states, spirituality, in its varied forms in modern society is connected, to a greater or lesser degree, with religion.   When considering the development of spirituality associated with prayer this connection with religion becomes even more firmly recognised.   As young people come to an age of accepting or confirming association with a faith tradition, spiritual understanding of prayer and experiences in prayer are valued as indications of maturity.   Therefore, teaching about prayer and the practice of prayer are important parts of religious education in schools associated with religious traditions.

However, in the liberal education of the past , religion and spirituality have largely been considered personal aspects of life, not able to be included in secular, contemporary education(Nord & Haynes, 1998; Ricoeur, 1995).   In the United Kingdom the development of spirituality has become an educational objective, and spiritual

development in students is linked to the development of religious understanding (Hill, 1990; Moran, 1981)

 This subject is discussed more fully in chapter two of this thesis, but at this stage it should be recognised that a change in the appreciation of the role of spirituality and religion in education is taking place. According to Proffitt (1998), "we need to appreciate, to feel a giftedness of our lives if we are to be whole" (p.102) and Moran (1981) claimed that "Our world badly needs the passion and vision of religion tempered by the forms and rationality of education" (p. 164). Moran (1989) continued "although religious education is somewhat alien to most speakers today, its development and spread are important to tolerance, understanding and peace in our world" (p. 23). Ricoeur (1995) spoke of the need for the Christian "absurd logic of hope . . . the passion for the possible" (p. 206). Ward (1997) asserted that the postmodern culture is the "current climate where theological discourse is once again culturally significant" (p. xviii). These and other writers argued, therefore, that religious education and education in spirituality make a positive contribution to the general education of children. In this thesis the term "religious education" means the formal time given in a school program to the subject of religion and to worship experiences provided by the school. "Education in spirituality" is not a common term in the Australian educational context but it is related to an emphasis in education on the non-material or relational aspects of life. Chapter two will extend the definition of spirituality.

 This study investigates the understanding of prayer held by primary school children who are involved in different forms of religious education. Therefore, it can

make a contribution to ongoing development of theory and practice in religious education through looking at children's views of the nature and function of prayer.

Education for Resilience

Education for resilience is being discussed in different areas of contemporary Australian life (Deveson, 2003; Victoria, 1999; Withers & Russell, 2001). There is awareness that the pressures of life demand an adult response in the design and provision of new emphases in education. It is proposed that education should provide "protective factors" for the enhancement of the emotional, mental and spiritual health of the child (Kegan, 1994; Withers & Russell, 2001). As will be discussed more fully in chapter two of this thesis, resilience is a complex notion concerning the child's capacity to cope under difficult circumstances in life (Frydenberg, 1999; Glantz & Johnson, 1999; Lazarus & Lazarus, 1994; Pargament, 1997; Rutter, 1995). The planned curriculum in the school, is one part of the educational environment which can enhance children's capacity to cope with difficulties in life.

That young people use religion and spirituality as protective factors in situations of stress, was suggested by recent empirical studies conducted by the *Human Services Risk and Protective Factors Survey* (Victoria, 1999). The results of this study identified 25 risk factors and ten protective factors. Of the ten protective factors, "religiosity", "belief in a moral order" and involvement in community were identified as significant. Under the working definition of spirituality as outlined in chapter two of this thesis, all ten of the protective factors could be considered spiritual or religious. Other research (Altschuler & Ruble, 1989; Epperly, 2000; Gow, 1999; Resnic, Harris, & Blum, 1993)

also support the position that religion and prayer have a strong association with the ability to cope with life's challenges.

This study examines the possibility of the use of prayer as a protective factor by children. Investigating the perception of the meaning and function of prayer for children is part of the wider concern to identify ways in which the school curriculum can aid resilience in children.

Religious Psychology

The psychology of religion has provided another framework for this study. Aspects of religious belief and prayer have been linked to the activity of meaning-making, identity formation, object relations theory and attachment as well as coping and resilience as outlined in the previous section (St. Clair, 1994; Wulff, 1997). Of particular significance is the research in the literature of Pargament (1997) who discussed a relationship between various forms of religious belief and religious practice which aid coping. His work reports on many areas of research using adult participants, and he suggests that it is necessary to extend this to research with children (Pargament, 1997 p.313).

Personal Interest of the Researcher

Van Manen (1994) stated that a primary task for the researcher is to make explicit his or her personal background and interest. The personal context of the researcher brings wide experience to assist analysis and the interpretation of research. However, it is also recognised that this personal influence can obscure or distort the research findings in both quantitative and qualitative research (Hootkoop-Steenstra, 2000; Wiersma, 1995).

The researcher undertaking this study has been involved in education in the Australian government school system and in independent schools associated with the Anglican Church and the Uniting Church, at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education.   A portion of this teaching was in the discipline of religious education, presenting the Christian faith tradition through worship activities and classroom teaching. In the classroom, religious education was conducted from a Christian perspective with attention to open philosophical enquiry and multifaith understanding and respect.   In the educational setting of teaching religion the researcher has observed that ideas about and practice of prayer appeared to be valued by children.

The researcher was also involved in student welfare and guidance, and this area of experience has initiated interest in identifying ways in which children cope with challenging life situations, leading to the inclusion of the "function" of prayer as part of the study topic.

The following words of Van Manen (1994) have been taken into account in this study:

It is better to make explicit our understandings, beliefs, biases, assumptions, predispositions and theories.   We try to come to terms with assumptions, not in order to forget them again, but rather to turn this knowledge against itself, as it were, thereby exposing its shallow or concealing character.   (p. 47)

Awareness of the potential influence of the researcher in the design and conduct of the research has been considered and taken into account.   The discipline of "bracketing" (B. Moore & Habel, 1982, p. 63) has consciously been used by the researcher through the data collection and analysis.   This has meant that the researcher

was actively aware of personal beliefs and consciously held these personal beliefs separate from the other beliefs that emerged in the research data. Many individuals have also been used in rater-reliability checking to facilitate the intention for objectivity in this research[1].

Aims of the Study

This study aims to investigate the perceptions about prayer by children from different educational settings. The participants have been drawn from six distinct school systems and from various religious and philosophical traditions. These traditions reflect some of the diversity of contemporary, multifaith and multicultural Australian life. The findings of this study are proposed as a starting point for further studies and many directions for further research are suggested in the final chapter.

Investigating the meaning and function of prayer as an aspect of spirituality is a new area of research which has implications for education, particularly religious education. There are also implications for the general society through the generation of additional resources in student welfare.

The aims of this study are:

1.   To discover the perceptions about the meaning and function of prayer that are held by primary school children in a range of Australian school settings.

2.   To discover some of the ways in which children learn to pray.

3.   To add to existing knowledge about children's spirituality.

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[1] Assistance was given by many professional colleagues to view the video recordings and other aspects of data. They were directed to note any aspects of interviewer influence and assisted in analysis of the data. A full listing of those involved in rater-reliability checking is provided in chapter three.

4.   To offer recommendations in relation to the perceptions about the meaning and

function of prayer held by primary school children that will have implications for

professionals working with children in education, welfare and other contexts.

Methodology

The nature of the topic has led to the choice of a qualitative method of analysis in

the human science tradition (Meltzoff, 1998).   The method of Grounded Theory (Glaser,

1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was chosen as an instrument particularly useful in

situations where little theory was already in existence.   Grounded Theory involves a

wide collection of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 p.101), in this case the ideas, perceptions

and experiences of prayer by children.   In the discipline of Grounded Theory, intentional

constant comparison of the data leads to the identification of categories and properties

which provide the underpinning ideas from which new theory is generated.   A full

description and justification of the method is contained in chapter three of this thesis.

Definition of Terms

Some definitions of key terms used throughout the thesis are proposed which

clarify the objectives in this research.   These definitions introduce the "meaning", the

"function" and the concept of "prayer".

Meaning

The Macquarie Dictionary (1981) gives the following definition of "meaning" as

"that which is intended to be, or actually is, expressed or indicated; signification; import"

(p. 1083).   The investigation of the meaning of prayer seeks to explore children's

perceptions of prayer related to their experience and understanding.   The researcher

considered the possibility that in contemporary Australian society, where Church

attendance has declined (Bouma, 2002), prayer might not be significant for many participants. Accordingly, indications of lack of meaning were considered relevant and the interview questions allowed for negative findings as well as positive findings regarding the meaning of prayer.

Function

The use of the term "function" refers to the "action or activity proper to a . . . thing" related to the "performance of some operation or duty" (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 742). "Function" in this definition investigates the ways in which prayer can be used, or the reasons for the use of prayer. This is the psychological role of prayer in children's ordinary life. "Function" can be understood in a social context, such as a way to connect with others or becoming part of a group for mutual reinforcement of belief. This research indicates that there is also a psychological function or role of prayer in the inner life of the individual, such as when articulating a relationship with God or asking for help.

Prayer

Prayer is defined as "devout petition to, or any form of spiritual communication with, God or an object of worship" (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 1357). Chapter two of this thesis provides further discussion of this definition relating to the different faith traditions represented in the study. Prayer is viewed as an aspect in the broad field of spirituality, which is discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

Structure of the Thesis

Chapter Two – Literature Review

Specific areas of literature which are linked to the research aims have been

examined, and these include, children's spirituality, prayer and contemporary secular life.

Literature about children's spirituality forms the first section, and is followed by an

overview of contemporary thinking about prayer as a spiritual experience in the Christian

Jewish and Islamic traditions, because these are the traditions from which the participants

in the study are drawn.   Literature relating to forms of religious education used in

teaching prayer has been considered, as has material related to the contemporary

Australian social context of secularisation, for this was associated with issues of concern

for student well-being.

As well as providing a rationale for this study, the review of literature formed a

foundation in the light of which the findings of this research are examined and

interpreted.

Chapter Three - The Research Design

This chapter outlines and justifies the choice of the method selected for this study.

These choices arose from the particular requirements of the topic and the epistemological

assumptions of the researcher.   The use of the specific method of Grounded Theory

within the broader methodology of the Human Sciences tradition of qualitative analysis

(Sarantakos, 1998), is proposed as appropriate for this study where new theory is being

generated.

The research design used individual video-taped interviews, which were

conducted with 60 subjects from primary school Year five (children about 10 years old)

in six distinct schooling systems in the urban area of the city of Melbourne, a

multicultural/multifaith society. The schools involved were a Catholic, Independent (Christian), Christian (Parent-Controlled or Charismatic School), Orthodox Jewish, Islamic and a Government school. Additional material was gathered through illustrations of prayer by the participants and through a written exercise involving the completion of given sentences. The video-tapes were analysed using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1998) and four different forms of rater-reliability checking were employed to assist in the analysis.

Chapter Four - The Meaning of Prayer

The four stages of analysis of the research data are displayed in tables and figures. Associated with these tables and figures, discussion shows the synthesis of the triangulated collection of data. From the analysis, proposed theory is presented which displays a dominant category with associated properties, indicating the meaning of prayer for the participants in this study.

The findings from the data are then discussed in the context of the literature reviewed.

Chapter Five - The Function of Prayer

The data are analysed using the same structure of tables, figures and discussion as in the previous chapter. From the analysis, proposed theory is presented showing a dominant category with associated properties, indicating the function of prayer for the participants in this study, and again these findings are discussed in the context of the literature previously reviewed.

Chapter Six - Education and Prayer

This chapter discusses the findings from the data in relation to the perception of how prayer is learned. During the course of the analysis the learning/teaching exchange emerged as an important finding with particular implications for religious education. The findings of this chapter are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed.

Chapter Seven - Conclusions

Implications and recommendations from this study are related to the development of religious education and education for spirituality. The study also proposes implications for general education. The findings related to the function of prayer led to recommendations concerned with student welfare in the areas of education for resilience and the psychology of religion. Recommendations for ongoing verification and extension of this research are also proposed

Significance of this Study

This study has significance and implications in four areas, these being: children's spirituality, religious education, the psychology of religion and student welfare.

Children's Spirituality

The research reported in this thesis provides new understanding of the awareness of prayer for children. The findings extend existing research regarding how children perceive a relationship to God through prayer, a relationship to the faith community through prayer, a relationship to the external environment through prayer, and an inner relationship with the self through prayer. Chapter two of this thesis provides a definition of spirituality which encompasses these varied forms of relationship. The view of spirituality as "relational consciousness" (Hay, 1998, p.113) was examined in the understanding of prayer in the Australian multicultural and multifaith context.

Religious Education

This study provides new insights into how prayer is learned in contemporary Australian society.   The participants showed both understanding about prayer as well as communal and personal experiences in prayer.   Some participants came from schools established by various faith traditions and this enabled different aspects of religious education to be considered in the development of an understanding of prayer for children. Other participants came from the government school system and this provided an additional layer of the research data.

Psychology of Religion

Ideas about the meaning and function of prayer for children are related to existing theories about prayer as a psychological reality and a psychological tool (Twerski, 2001; Ulanov & Ulanov, 1982).   In this study coping and resilience, as well as meaning-making and identity formation, are examined in relationship to the act of prayer.   Thus the study makes a contribution to the larger field of enquiry, the psychology of religion (Nye and Savage, 1998; Wulff, 1997).

Student Welfare

This research has taken place in an environment of social concern regarding the increasing incidence of depression, self harm and antisocial activity amongst young people (Tacey, 2003; Withers & Russell, 2001).   The evidence of distress being experienced by young people has been documented in the context of wider western society (Carroll, 1998; Kegan, 1994) and in the Australian society (Carr- Gregg, 1999; Withers & Russell, 2001).   There is "a sense of urgency about the need to enhance the provision of integrated human support and educational services . . . the social and economic stakes for individuals, families and society at large are high and rising sharply"

(Wither & Russell, 2001, p. x).   The study investigated the ideas of children to determine if prayer is perceived to have contemporary meaning and value, and to make a contribution to coping with life's challenges.

The current social situation seems to demand that attention be directed towards the aspects of education defined in the UNESCO report as "learning to live together" and "learning to be" (Delores,1996, p. 94).   Religious education and education in spirituality are proposed through this thesis as interrelated possibilities to meet these educational needs.   Prayers in Church, Mosque and Synagogue are part of contemporary social life and social support structures, and this study seeks to determine if these communal support structures are recognised and used by children.   These are questions relating to the ongoing welfare of children in contemporary Australian society.

In the following chapter literature will be reviewed to demonstrate the immediate context of this study within established research as well as the boarder areas of academic thinking which provided a context out of which the research has arisen and in which the data will be analysed.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Aims of the Chapter

Chapter one has given an outline of the aims of this research, its context and key terms, and its potential to extend knowledge of children's spirituality.   This chapter reviews the areas of literature related to the current research, providing a framework in which the findings of the study can be later discussed and interpreted.

Section one examines literature related to the immediate context of the research. The definition of spirituality used in the thesis is identified, interpreting spirituality as a broad aspect of human life of which prayer is a part.   This is followed by a review of empirical research related to spirituality and the subject of children's prayer.   A review of Australian researchers: Crawford and Rossiter (1991), Mackay (1999) Engebretson (2001) Duffy (2002) Victorian Government department of Human Services (1999), as well as some overseas research relates to the rationale and design of the study.   The review will highlight lacunae in existing research which can be addressed to some extent within this study.

Section two of this chapter reviews four interrelated areas of research and theory underlying the research questions:

- Children's spirituality: Spirituality is interpreted through the literature as a vital and dynamic part of the life of children.

- Prayer as a part of the expression of spirituality: The literature on prayer in the Christian tradition is examined with some interpretation from a psychological perspective.   As some participants in the study were from the Muslim and Jewish traditions, literature suggested by the schools associated with these traditions was reviewed.

- The context of religious education. The schools from which students were interviewed had different views of religious education as well as different practice. An understanding of these differences is important for interpreting results and proposing implications for religious education.

- Australian cultural context: The multifaith and secularised society in Australia is the cultural context in which the participants live. Aspects of this culture are reviewed with a view to their relevance in interpreting the findings. Special attention was given to two aspects, secularisation and concerns for children's well-being.

Section one - The Immediate Research Context

Defining Spirituality

Since spirituality is a central concept in this thesis, a working definition at the start of this chapter is essential. The literature on spirituality is broad and complex, there is a reluctance to actually define the term. The following selection of quotations show some aspects of meaning and interpretation of spirituality:

Part of the Inner Psychic Life

From the original Latin root of the word, spirituality can be identified as part of the inner life, a motive force found in human beings:

Spiritual - "of or pertaining to the spirit or soul as distinguished from the physical nature" (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 1661).

Spirit –"the principle of conscious life" from the Latin '*spiritus'*- breath of life (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 1661).

"Awareness sensing . . . mystery sensing . . . value sensing" (R. Nye, 1996, p. 146).

Connected with Feelings

Spirituality can be seen as a link between the mind, the psyche and the affective dimension of human feeling:

"a quite distinct kind of psychology, put in the service of a particular exertion of love" (Pascal cited in Coles, 1990, p. 10).

" a wellspring of love and wisdom" (Hart, 2003, p.2).

Related to Moral Decision-Making

Spirituality also takes in the moral dimension expressed in human motivation, thinking and "right" living.   The moral dimension is associated with responsibilities and relationships:

" the common denominator . . . of morality and mind, energy and essence both secular and non-secular" (Moffett, 1994, p.19)

"solving problems of meaning and value"   (Zohar & Mashall, 2000, p. 5).

"the capacity for wonder and wisdom, for compassion and deep questioning, and for seeing truth beneath the surface of the physical world" (Hart, 2003, p. 3).

Relationship with Transcendence

Spirituality is ascertained as a means of finding God, the transcendent, the author or guiding principle of life:

"Our way of being in the world…in the light of the Mystery at the core of the universe" (Harris & Moran, 1998, p. 109).

" A desire for connectedness, which often expresses itself in an emotional

relationship with an invisible sacred presence"   (Tacey, 2000, p.17).

Concerned with the Environment
Spirituality can be seen both, as a search for understanding of, and respect for, the

past, and the desire for a future state of harmony:

"an experience of value which transcends personal concerns" (Hay,1998, p. 70).

We yearn to reclaim the deep, primal, sacred story of our evolving universe; of

planet earth . . . the diverse and magnificent array of life forms around us . . . (the)

story of the evolution of spiritual consciousness within humanity itself; and

finally, in the contemporary desire to create a one-world family characterized by

love, justice, peace and liberation (O'Murchu, 1997, p. ix).

Part of Religion
Spirituality can be interpreted as part of the religious quest.   Religious mystics

and saints of the past and in the present, value the inner life of the spirit in its relationship

to God as an ongoing religious struggle and joy (á Kempis, 1981; de Mello, 1987; Doig,

1983; Dreyer, 1989; Hederman, 1999; Lawrence, 1982; Nouwen, 1998; T. Moore, 1992).

"The transformation and discovery of the self . . . in encounter, it is an activity

constantly stirred up and sustained by the other . . . out of provisionality and into

the adventure of incarnation . . . intimately related to theology" (Mc Intosh, 1998,

p. 6).

Separate from Religion
Other authors see spirituality as distinct from the various forms of organised

religious traditions:

"Spirituality has become a code word for almost anything but religion of a traditional, conventional kind" (Mackay, 1999, p. 225).

"The religious tradition . . . can successfully stifle a good deal of valuable and suggestive spiritual introspection" (Neibuhr cited in Coles, 1990, p. 278).

The literature reviewed on the subject of spirituality has overwhelmingly considered the rise in interest as a positive sign of human development in our contemporary society (O'Murchu, 2002; Tacey, 2003; Mc Intosh, 1998). However, an alternative viewpoint should be acknowledged. Bridger (2003) considers the possibility that the rise of interest in spirituality could be a sociological extension of consumerism. As life has become fragmented with a loss of confidence in scientific progress and rational certainty the community is turning to the inner life of spirituality. However, his understanding is that this form of spirituality can be shallow self-gratification rather than the transforming other-worldly experience traditionally associated with religion. This viewpoint is acknowledged, but the consumer imagery might be the only way in which our contemporary western society can express the need for a spiritual dimension in life.

The definition of "relational consciousness" (Hay, 1998, p. 113) has been chosen as the working definition for this study. Hay suggested that this broad definition of spirituality has four areas; relationship with the self, relationship with others, relationship with the environment and relationship with God. Investigating the meaning and function of prayer is closely associated with the relationship with God, and the image of God is often associated with religious traditions. However, the present study aims to collect information from some subjects with little exposure to the formal religious images of God. It is possible that the idea of God will be unclear or even rejected by some

participants. Therefore the broad definition of spirituality proposed by Hay (1998) can be seen to relate to both religious and non-religious participants.

The research by Hay (1998) identified through this definition of spirituality, has not only personal benefit but also wide social benefits. Hay stated, "These findings give support to the traditional intuition that spirituality underpins ethical behavior and encourages social cohesion" (Hay, 1998, p.18). Hay considered that the development of spirituality in children was necessary for the well-being of society. The sense of connectedness or attachment experienced by children can be viewed as the first step leading to further development of wider relationships with the society and the environment (Phillips & Stonebridge, 1998). Spirituality according to the view of Hay (1998), gives security to the individual through the experience of being related; related to the primary care-giver and related to God the giver of life; through this relationship empathy develops leading to care for the society and the wider environment. The present study explores children's understanding of prayer as part of an understanding of spirituality.

Hay and Nye (1998) regarded spirituality as part of children's experience, a kind of inner knowing, but different from the cognitive "knowing" of formal education. In their writing spiritual "knowing" is linked to a deeper, more primary awareness or experience as outlined by Hardy (1979) and Robinson (1977). Hay and Nye proposed, that the spiritual capacity has evolved in humans as a survival mechanism, an "insight" which helps humans navigate through the "overload of demands on our consciousness" (Hay, 1998 p.20). The final part of this literature review expands on the idea of children

today living in the "pace and pressure of urban living" (Eckersley, 1988, p. 40).   The

contemporary demands of life in western society are examined through literature.

Associated Empirical Research - Young People, Spirituality and Prayer

Australian Research

Children's spirituality has not received great attention in Australian research.

Measures of spirituality, mainly from adult subjects, have been shown in the research

work of Mackay (1999) and spirituality in the lives of teenagers has been the focus of

research by Crawford & Rossiter (1996) and Duffy (2002).   Engebretson et al. (2001)

used senior primary and middle secondary students in their investigation of religiosity

and spirituality.   Research by the Victorian Government department of Human Services

(1999) is also relevant to this section.   Although not primarily focused on spirituality, the

Victorian Human Services report shows the need for further research in relation to

religiosity in children and young people.   It is related to children's spirituality through

the findings of "protective factors" for the well-being of children.

- Mackay 1999

The work of Mackay on spirituality was based in a wider social research project

throughout Australia from 1974-1994.   Using focus groups representing different age,

gender and socio-economic groups, Mackay investigated the cultural diversity of

contemporary Australian life.   He asserted that even though only 20% of Australians

attended church regularly, the rate of decline in church attendance has slowed and 74% of

people still reported belief in God (p. 219).   Within the complex and often contradictory

findings, Mackay (1999) stated that there was a new consciousness of spirituality.

There are hints of a generational shift in attitudes to materialism. Having grown

up in a society where consumerism is the norm- as opposed to the society where

their parents grew up, where consumerism was shiny and new- young Australians,

like their counter parts around the world, are developing a heightened interest in

so-called postmaterial values.   (p.xxvii)

Mackay suggested that part of the "postmaterial" value structure was seen the exploration

and interest in spirituality.   His research showed that there is a growing rejection of the

acquisition of material possessions and a rise of interest in many forms of spiritual

activity.   This relates to the research reported in this thesis as it investigates the value the

spiritual through the perception of prayer by children.

- Crawford and Rossiter (1996)

Crawford and Rossiter found that many adolescents had a privatised view of

spirituality linked in an individualistic way to various forms of religion.   Through

interpretation of experience in teaching adolescents Crawford and Rossiter (1996)

identified different aspects of spirituality, including belonging to religious groups,

involvement in social action and personal value formation.   This was summarised in ten

elements that Crawford and Rossiter (1991) considered to be prominent in the spirituality

of young people:

They look for clear statements of ideas and ideals about life and its management.

They form beliefs and values from a variety of sources.

They would like to personalize religion that is not too prescriptive about beliefs

and morality.

They do not see a division between the secular and religious.

They are less likely to be involved in religious groups than to be involved in social action.

They are conscious of the negative effects of irresponsible economic activities.

They are increasingly questioning the economic values and principles of politics and culture.

There is greater questioning and agitation about values.

There is a greater tendency to directly challenge authorities.

There is a greater consciousness of the violence in society.

(pp. 7-8)

These elements have been identified using data from adolescent subjects. The present study using young children, both extends and has the potential to challenge or support Crawford and Rossiter's views. The present study, focusing on prayer, will be likely to give more detailed attention to spirituality that includes a relationship with God.

- Engebretson, de Souza & Salpietro 2001

Engebretson (2003) cited the research of Kay and Francis (1996) which defined contemporary western society as a time of "drift from the churches" where "to be irreligious is normal" (p. 8). In awareness of the contemporary culture, research was conducted by Engebretson, de Souza, and Salpietro (2001) that surveyed 548 students, 240 from primary school Year Six and 338 secondary school Year Nine. All of the participants attended Catholic schools and 85% reported a family cultural background as Catholic. The survey covered four areas of spirituality: mystery associated with belief in a supreme being, inner peace associated with prayer, values and justice, and relationships. The findings demonstrated that children in the primary age group "were extremely

positive about issues of spirituality and self-esteem" (p. 61) with the great majority (97%) either "sometimes" or "often" spending time in prayer and/or quiet meditation (p. 17). It was suggested that further investigation was needed to understand the connection between religious practice and the home culture. The present research has built on some of the findings of Engebretson et al. (2001), in that it explores in detail perceptions about the meaning and function of prayer. In addition the participants in the research reported in this thesis were drawn from a range of faith and cultural backgrounds, so a deeper layer is added to the existing Australian research.

- Duffy (2002)

Duffy's research (2002) used 1000 adolescent subjects drawn from middle secondary Catholic schools. Using quantitative analysis of a questionnaire, Duffy identified the subjects' images of God and how these images were formed, providing a further exploration of spirituality in young people. Her findings are important to the present study as they acknowledged the influence of the secular culture, while at the same time affirming the ongoing thinking about God within the secular culture. However, once again the subjects are adolescents, further highlighting the need for research with younger (primary school) children.

- Victorian Government Department of Human Services (Victoria, 1999)

As mentioned in chapter one, the Victorian Human Services conducted a survey with 9,000 adolescents in Year Nine to identify risk and protective factors. In a similar way to the research by Resnic et al. (1993) in the USA, the Victorian research was motivated by an awareness of the increasing occurrence of problems of self- harm and antisocial behaviours amongst adolescents. One outcome of the research in Victoria was the

finding that "religiosity" and "belief in a moral order" (p. 13) were protective factors

against self-harm and depression.   While greater research is needed to define more

clearly the particular aspects of religiosity identified as "protective", it is quite possible

that the term "religiosity" is linked with the use of prayer.   The idea of spirituality in the

wider sense of Hay's definition (1998) is well represented in the various "protective

factors" of the Victorian survey as the relationships formed with the family, school and

community are identified.   The present study seeks to further understand the concept of

"religiosity" and through the investigation of the "function" of prayer, gain greater

insight into the concept of other communal and personal "protective factors" for children.

International Research

A considerable amount of empirical research in spirituality, linking religion and

the ability to cope with the challenges of life, has been conducted using adult subjects.

Pargament (1997) reviewed over 300 empirical studies where different forms of religious

activity and belief were measured alongside coping ability.   Although some forms of

religion with images of punishment were not considered helpful in coping, in most cases,

Pargament concluded that "Religious coping has proved to be an important predictor of

adjustment.   Clearly religion deserves greater recognition and attention than it has

received in the coping literature" (Pargament, 1997, p. 312).   Further research was

suggested by Pargament, research regarding how children perceive religion was one

suggestion.   It is possible that children as well as adults use religion and various aspects

of religion such as prayer, as a form of coping.

Epperly (2000) reviewed a number of research studies leading him to conclude

that "physicians are discovering the importance of prayer, spirituality and religious

practice in enhancing physical and mental health and responding to stressful life circumstances" (p. 3).   Epperly suggested that attention was being given in medical research and training to new understanding, respect and use of religious concepts in patient care.   The negative effect of stress on immune system recovery has been acknowledged and the use of meditation and prayer was increasingly recognised as effective in treatment.   This was one example given by Epperly of a holistic view which advocated spiritual practices in medical treatment.

Other significant international studies have been conducted investigating adolescent spirituality.   In adolescent health, Resnic, Harris and Blum (1993) conducted a study of over 36,000 senior secondary students, in which spirituality and religious connectedness were identified as protective factors.   This research, like the *Victorian Human Services Research* (1999), has influenced the inclusion of perception of the function of prayer as an aspect of the present study.   In religious education, Duffy (2002) outlined other significant international research into the spirituality of adolescents, such as that conducted by Harris and Moran (1998), Brienen (1998), Lealman (1986) and Schwab (2000), (cited in Duffy, 2002, pp. 45-49).

Very few research projects have investigated young children and spirituality, particularly with reference to prayer.   Only four studies, three North American and one British study, have been identified as being directly related to the present study.

- Elkind Spilka and Long (1968)

The study by Elkind, Spilka and Long (1968) sought to identify the developmental changes that occur in children's understanding of prayer.   They recognised that "prayer is a vital activity in the lives of many children and adults" (p. 51),

yet the developmental nature of understanding about prayer had not received academic attention.   They noted that "only 25 scholarly papers since 1900 have dealt with the psychological aspects of prayer" (p. 51).   Of these 25 papers the authors state that most were of a religious, theological and devotional nature rather than psychological.

Elkind, Spilka and Long (1968) conducted a study involving 160 children aged from five to twelve years old.   The subjects were drawn from several religious denominations of the Christian tradition.   Some aspects of their interview protocol were used for this study.   The method of semi-structured interviews and the use of a sentence completion exercise by Elkind et al. were recognised as valuable tools in data collection. Certain findings from their study, regarding the developmental stages of children in their discussion of prayer, have influenced the design of this present study.   Their identification of the stage of development where children possess a sufficient level of verbal ability and experience to speak about prayer, was significant for this researcher's selection of Year Five primary school as a suitable age for this study.

The research of Elkind et al. (1968) highlighted the need for further study on children and prayer, for their work was limited to children coming from the Christian faith tradition.   The research reported in this thesis takes a broader investigative focus using participants coming from a variety of faith traditions.   The investigation of the meaning and function of prayer in the present research also provides more detailed data relating to the perceptions of prayer by children, rather than a developmental analysis.

- Coles (1990)

The research of Coles (1990) has also provided a valuable starting point for the research reported in this thesis.   Coles interviewed children from many different faith

traditions and children not conventionally thought to be religious. His intention was to investigate children's spirituality, and he gathered data about a wide collection of ideas, interests, desires and experiences. Coles concluded that prayer could be seen as part of the spiritual life of children.

The non-intrusive interview technique and encouraging manner of Coles (1990 p. 14) were models for the interview protocol used in this study. At the outset Coles (1990) identified himself as the learner asking for help from the subjects. There was no hint of disapproval of any comments offered in the interview, but rather a warm compassionate interest. The interviews recorded by Coles show strong similarity to the style of interaction employed by Erikson (1950/1985) and Winnicott (1958) who were acknowledged (Coles, 1990) for their ability to draw out the uniqueness of each child in the interview process. As will be discussed further in the following chapter, awareness of the skills needed in interviewing children was an area of concern for the researcher in this study of children and prayer.

This study could be viewed as an extension of the work of Coles (1990) in the field of children's spirituality. The present study selected prayer as one area of spirituality relevant to children and used participants from varied faith traditions. The work of Coles (1990) and the other researchers cited here will provide a context for the interpretation of findings in this study.

- Heller (1986)

Heller (1986) conducted research in urban North America, amongst selected children of mixed age, gender and enthusiasm with a focus on the image of God, assuming that the image of God was a part of the spirituality of the child. Prayer, in the

form of writing a letter to God, was part of his interview protocol, and Heller's research has connections with the theme of this research.

Heller used semi-structured interviews with 40 children selected from four different backgrounds of faith: Christian Catholic, Christian Protestant, Hindu and Muslim. Using a variety of methods to elicit data such as discussion, drawing, writing and play, Heller demonstrated the importance of listening to the child through various forms of expression. His cautious, non-directive interview style and his use of drawing, have influenced the design of the present study. The use of different forms of data collection has also been influential for this study, to ensure triangulation in the collection of data.

Heller's work (1986) gave some attention to children's prayer, but most attention was directed to the image of God in the mind of the child. The current research extends the research of Heller with a primary focus on prayer, and a different method of participant selection in a different cultural setting.

- Hay (1998)

Hay with Nye (Hay, 1998), working in the United Kingdom, interviewed a sample of 18, six to seven year old children and 20, ten to eleven year old children from schools not associated with any religious group. Hay and Nye used photographs as a stimulus to discussion, and listened to the stories told by children that illustrated their spirituality. The open interview technique used by Hay and Nye (1998) was a useful model for the present study, "One needs to enquire carefully and attend to each child's personal style if one is to 'hear' their spirituality at all" (p. 99). This study has benefited from Hay's discussion providing important cautions for the researcher in data collection,

emphasising the need for sensitivity when crossing cultural boundaries. These issues are addressed in more detail in the following chapter.

The work of Hay with Nye (1998) explored the meaning of spirituality for children. This study has a specific aim of investigating the perception of prayer as a part of spirituality. Hay and Nye used visual prompts to initiate discussion, and it is possible that through this protocol, these gave some direction to the discussion. The present research has avoided that possibility through a less-structured, open interview technique, where children drew their own illustrations of prayer.

In the light of the foregoing review of the research literature about young people, spirituality and prayer, it is claimed that this research extends current knowledge.

Section 2 - Wider Context of Theories and Writing

Part 1 - Children's Spirituality

As noted in the previous section of this literature review, the pediatrician and child psychologist Robert Coles (1990) conducted significant research investigating children's spirituality. Coles' initial work examined the medical stress experienced by children during the poliomyelitis epidemic of the 1950 (Coles, 1967). This, together with his later investigation of social and racial stress (Coles, 1986), led to an interest in the spirituality of children. Years after his initial investigations, Coles declared that, as he looked back on his transcripts and notes, he realized the deep spiritual beliefs and concerns being expressed by children which at the time he had overlooked (Coles, 1990, p. 308). His later research (1990) was concerned with the spiritual life of children using subjects from Christian, Jewish, Muslim and agnostic homes. As with Nye (1996) and

Hay (1998), Coles spoke of children's spirituality as "insight" rather than as intellectual knowledge.

Many authors (Hardy, 1979; Hay, 1998; T. Moore, 1992; Nye and Savage, 1998) considered the possibility that spirituality is a human attribute present in the lives of all children, an inner part of the life experience.   This has also received attention in the recent publication by Hart (2003) of observations and analyses of the spiritual experiences of children.   Hart maintained that these spiritual experiences of children are often kept secret from adults and particular sensitivity is needed on the part of the researcher when investigating spirituality with children.   The method of careful and patient listening used by Hart to find the stories from children, have confirmed the methods used in the research reported in this thesis.   Many of the stories related by Hart (2003) show the child's understanding and use of prayer as a different form of awareness and communication.

Halstead (1999), the guest editor of the first edition of the *International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* highlighted the rise of interest in the spirituality of children.   He noted four factors considered to have influenced this increase in attention.   The first influence came from the various acts of British legislation which, from 1944 to 1988, directed education to address the development of children's spirituality.   This stimulated public debate about the nature of spiritual development and about how it might be promoted through education.   Secondly, he suggested that there has been in recent years, a growing awareness of the development of the whole child coming from educational psychology.   The academic achievement of a child in the school setting cannot be separated from the other areas of development; the physical, social, emotional and

spiritual are all inter-related with the cognitive.   Thirdly, he asserted that insight from

feminist scholarship has brought a greater awareness of the centrality of relationships and

intuition for human well-being.   Finally, Halstead suggested that our world-view has

changed.   Increasingly there is a tendency to see rational and spiritual aspects of life as

complementary rather than conflicting.   Halstead (1999) considered that the so-called

"utilitarian" approach to education with literacy and numeracy skills viewed as central to

later economic success, was now being challenged.   The development of academic skills

were now viewed as only part of the whole.   There was a desire for deeper wisdom and

spiritual insight to balance the more material emphasis on skill development.   Many

would consider Halstead (1999) to be unduly optimistic in relation to the rise in

awareness of spirituality.   Certainly the image of economic rationalism is still a

dominant force in Australia according to Costello (1999).

Imagination has been considered by many authors as part of spirituality (Fisher,

1999; Hart, 2003).   Rossiter (1999) recognised advertising on TV as using imagination in

relation to the image of the self as a means of tapping into young people's market

potential.   This is "not an appeal to information or reason" (p. 216) but a connection with

the environment outside of the self, a form of interaction on a partly subconscious level.

Rossiter suggested that this is a form of spiritual manipulation in the service of

consumerism.

The journal, *The Way,* published a supplement in 1996 devoted to the spirituality

of children.   Writing in the Foreword of this supplement, Hawkins (1996) proposed that

a common theme running through the articles was the advice that adults should journey

"humbly with children" as children can share with adults aspects of relationship with God

(p.4). It was suggested that children are endowed with "spiritual competence", an inner quality or power for faith development.

Mc Clure (1996) considered spirituality in children to be an innate capacity, likening it to the linguistic capacity as recognised by Noam Chomsky (1968). Just as a child is in some way "pre-programmed" to learn the syntax of language, so too the child has an awareness of the spiritual search for meaning, value and purpose. For Mc Clure the adult responsibility was to nurture the spiritual through reflection and silence as a first step towards faith development. Stewart (1996), like Mc Clure, considered spirituality an inner reality. She believed that all children hold some things in life as sacred, that is, some things which are held in a special spiritual relationship. She considered these "sacred" objects act as "icons". They invite children to "wonder, to puzzle, to imagine, to dwell in mystery and ask the big essential questions of life" (p. 43). It was through the sacred objects that children were given inner strength and confidence to explore new areas of life. In this way the spiritual life of connection to the "sacred objects" was central to the development of the child. This is a similar theme to Object Relations Theory (Rizzuto, 1979; St. Clair, 1994; Wulff, 1997) which is discussed more fully in the final section of this literature review.

de Souza (2003) asserted that since the 1970s spirituality has been recognised as valuable in health studies particularly as regards mental health. A recent example of this in Australia can be seen in the theme of "spirituality" chosen for the *Australian Suicide Prevention Conference* in 2003. However, de Souza considers that Australia pays little attention to the development of young people's spirituality in public education. She contrasted this to the situation in the United Kingdom where "spiritual education" is more

firmly established in the curriculum through legislation (Hill, 1990; Moran, 1989; Nye, 1996; Rossiter, 1996; Voils, 2003).   The legislation and normative documents referred to the "Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural" development of young people (Rossiter, 1996).   de Sousa considered that there was also greater awareness of education in spirituality in the USA and Canada (Larsen, 1998; Moffett, 1994; Smith and Carson, 1998).

Much of the educational interest in the USA, according to de Souza (2003), can be seen to relate to recent research in neuro-psychology and the emergence of the concept of "spiritual intelligence".   Zohar and Marshall (2000) proposed that "spiritual intelligence" (S.Q.) is the foundation for the effective working of both "emotional intelligence" (E.Q.) and "Intellectual intelligence" (I.Q.).   Much of this theory is based in the research of the 1990s of neuro-psychologist Persinger (1996) and neurologists Ramachandran (1998) and Singer (1999).   This recent research proposed the view that spirituality or "religious belief may be 'hard wired' into the brain" (Zohar and Marshall , 2000 p. 94).   Zohar and Marshall (2000) made reference to a "god spot" (p. 11) in the brain, situated in the temporal lobe which appears to be a facility for unitive thinking or knowing, a facility for awareness of the human place within the wider cosmos.   The term "god spot" is an unofficial term used by Ramachandran.   It is stated by Zohar and Marshall that this identification of a "god spot" does not indicate the existence of God, but rather it shows that the brain has evolved to incorporate a sensitivity to issues of meaning and value connected to the ultimate questions of life.   It is difficult at this stage to appraise such a proposal; it could be seen to raise questions about the reduction of the spiritual to the physio-chemical processes in the brain or to provide evidence that there

may be "biological" evidence for spirituality. This debate is complex and ongoing, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore it further, but the subject is noted for its possible relevance when considering the widespread use of prayer.

Larsen (2000) extended the discussion, linking the new developments in cognitive science with the teaching of religious education. He proposed that there was a neurological or biological basis for understanding the concept of God. This is still a very contentious issue, particularly for those who interpret such a proposal as a form of physical reductionism. In Australia, White (2003) studied various, so called "brain-based" teaching/learning strategies; he proposed that they helped in the development of a useful "pedagogical perspective" for religious education (p. 3). Although the educational implications from neuropsychological research are matters for continuing discussion, the importance of spiritual and religious thinking has been proposed by these authors. This theoretical possibility adds new perspectives to spirituality that can be taken into account in the interpretation of the results of this study.

Before finishing this section of the literature review, the earlier writing of Maria Montessori (1929) should be considered in terms of her contribution to current thinking about spirituality. Her pedagogical use of "silence and recollection" and "respect shown for the interior life of the child" (p. 2) have laid a foundation for much of what is now recognised as caring for children's spirituality. The collection of Montessori's lectures called *Education and Peace* (1949) referred to the inner spiritual nature of children in many ways. She wrote "The child would appear among us as the teacher of peace . . . children are the teachers of love . . . . The child possesses immeasurable abilities and unsuspected powers of intelligence. His heart is . . . sensitive to the need for justice"

(pp. 142-143).   Montessori's pedagogy has inspired modern research and experimentation in religious education as acknowledged by Cavalletti (1992) and Berryman (1991).   Her respect for the inner wisdom of the child influenced the open design of the interview protocol of this research.

This review has shown that the spirituality of children has been an area of educational interest and academic inquiry.   However, while spirituality is now receiving academic attention in health studies in Australia, its place in Australian education is not well defined.   This study will make a contribution to the understanding of children's spirituality, which may in turn have an influence on educational discourse.

The relationship between Spirituality and Religion

Prayer is usually associated with a concept of God, and this is often related to a particular religious tradition.   It was the case that many of the children who participated in this study were associated with a religious tradition, therefore interpretation of the data will require an examination of the relationship between spirituality and religion.   Much has been written debating the relationship between religion and spirituality, but as Duffy (2002) noted, there is generally strong agreement about the connection between the two.

Hervieu-Leger (2000) considered a religious tradition as, "The body of representations, images, theoretical and practical intelligence, behaviour attitudes and so on that a group or society accepts in the name of the *necessary* continuity between the past and the present" (p. 87).   Religion in this definition is a sense of connection with the wisdom of the past, acting within a social group and is related to a sense of connection with a transcendent being.   Religion in this way can be said to mediate the spiritual, as the forms, beliefs and rituals allow the relational consciousness to develop.   The great

mystics of the different faith traditions show this interplay between religious faith and the exploration of the spiritual (á Kempis, 1981; Dreyer, 1989; Leunig and Rahner, 1992; Roche de Coppens, 1987; Stoutzenberger and Bohner, 1989)

O'Murchu (1997) on the other hand, claims that the existence of spirituality can be found outside of religion, both in the past and present.

> Our spiritual story as a human species is at least 70,000 years old; by comparison, the formal religions have existed for a mere 4,500 years . . . spirituality tends to be perceived as a sub-system or offshoot of formal religion.   In practice the reality is quite different . . . spirituality concerns an ancient and primal search for meaning that is as old as humanity itself.   (O'Murchu, 1997, p. vii)

For O'Murchu (1997) the "primal search for meaning" is recognised as spirituality, a search that precedes the religious traditions.   The validity of this view of spirituality can be acknowledged, while at the same time accepting the contrary view that links religion and spirituality.   Religion, although a more recent phenomenon, is also concerned with the mystery of relational living and meaning-making.   O'Murchu (2003) writing as a religious member of the Sacred Heart Missionaries, recognises in the "evolving consciousness" of our time a mystical "earthly and cosmic integration" (p. 193).   He considers that the spiritual search is universal, not restricted to any religious group but an expression of our human relationship with the "creative God" (p.19).

Acknowledgment of both the religious and non-religious dimensions to spirituality is evident in the writings of researchers such as Crawford & Rossiter (1996) and Engebretson (2001).   They argue that this acknowledgment is important for interpreting the spirituality of contemporary young people.   In Australia, as in other

western countries, secularisation, the diminishing overt prominence and influence of institutionalised religion, does not necessarily means that there has been a diminution in young people's spiritual quest or their interest in the spiritual (Coupland,1995; Engebretson, 2001; Houtman and Mascini, 2002). Therefore the literature shows the complexity and ambiguity of the relationship between spirituality and religion.   Prayer can be considered as part of this complexity, involving the spiritual dynamic of relationship with God expressed in a personal way or through the various religious traditions.

The literature on spirituality that has been reviewed reflects its importance for contemporary society.   As the "breath of life" (Macquarie Dictionary, 1981, p. 1660) or "relational consciousness" (Hay 1998, p. 113) the definition of spirituality is broad. Spirituality, from the literature reviewed, is considered to be an awareness of a connection with the self, with others, with the environment and with the divine (Hay, 1998).   Spirituality can also be considered as part of the capacity for creative thinking and meaning-making (Zohar and Marshall, 2000).   Spirituality is recognised by many as an inner human attribute present in the lives of children (Hart, 2003).   Further research into the meaning and function of aspects of spirituality, such as prayer, extends current knowledge.

Part 2 - Prayer - A Spiritual Experience - Some Contemporary Readings
Because the literature on prayer is extensive, review of literature and research in this topic has necessarily been restricted.   A selection of definitions demonstrates the breadth of the concept of prayer across the three faith traditions to which the children who participated in this study belonged.   In the Jewish, Islamic and Christian literatures

prayer is regarded to be a spiritual experience of reaching out to or connecting with God. This section of the literature review aims to give the context of understanding about prayer that will be used for the interpretation of results.

Prayer in the Christian Tradition:
Prayer in the Christian tradition is expressed in relational terms with an emphasis on nurture and love, as shown in the following quotations:

"An inter-personal 'conversation' with God, in which love is experienced and given, and relationships of intimacy are founded" (Soares- Prabhu, 1990, p. 33).

"The raising of the heart and mind to God…it is the food we feed our souls" (Rahner, 1958, p. 8).

"Coming home" (Foster, 1992)

Prayer in the Jewish Tradition:
Prayer in the Jewish tradition is expressed as a special form of communication with God the creator, which is part of the relationship with God.   These concepts as evident in the following quotations:

"Prayer is man's (*sic*) constant awareness of the divine . . . like the covenant itself- is dynamic, an ongoing drama" (Cohn and Fisch, 1996, p.viii)

"To reach out and talk to my Father in Heaven, to my maker, the Holy One, blessed be He. There are times when I want to cry out to the Supreme Being, to communicate with Him in a way I cannot communicate with anyone else" (Donin, 1980 p. 3)

"Creating the bond between man and his maker" (Twerski, 2001)

Prayer in the Muslim Tradition:

The following quotations show prayer in the Muslim tradition as reflecting the multi–faceted relationship of humans with God:

"Every muscle of the body joins the soul and mind in the worship and glory of God" (Abdalati, 1996, p. 56).

"A matchless and unprecedented formula of intellectual meditations and spiritual devotion, of moral elevation and physical exercise" (Victorian Islamic College 2002, p. 5).

"Prayer is an appeal we perform to gain God's Favor, entreat forgiveness for a misdeed . . . express gratitude . . . ward off possible calamity and perform a religious duty" (Tabbarah,1988, p. 118).

Psychological Viewpoints

The work of Ann and Barry Ulanov (1982) engages with the study of prayer from a psychological perspective. They considered prayer to be the "primary" form of speech for humans, "a world of honesty" (p. 2), "the language of primary process thinking…not verbal. It comes in pictures and emotion-laden wishes and is private to ourselves" (p. 3). "Prayer enables speech; it extends us beyond our own known self into the unknown God" (p. 9). Prayer from this point of view, cannot be understood scientifically but rather understood through depth psychology, theological thinking, poetry, mysticism and philosophy.

From their psychological perspective the Ulanovs (1982) considered that prayer was a "projection" and an "introjection"(p. 28). Prayer was part of a fantasy image that projected difficult experiences or instincts out into the world and took into the self aspects of life that were necessary for development (introjection). The image of God

was part of the outer objective world and therefore part of the dynamic exchange; prayer was interpreted as part of the interaction process of the self with the outer world. Prayer acted as a form of "psychic bridge", in a similar way to other aspects of interactions that are associated both with real objects and fantasies about the real objects (p. 29).

Prayer was appraised by the Ulanovs (1982) to be part of the object/subject dynamic relationship enabling the growth of the self. Various aspects of prayer were outlined which showed the connection to the inner life of the subject. "Our life of desire prepares us for a life of prayer"(p. 14). Fear, depression, aggressive feelings and sexuality are aspects of human need which also lead to prayer, and prayer is seen as central in each. The search for understanding, peace and relationships are further deep aspects of need in life, "the inescapable fact of the contingency of our being" (p. 62). The Ulanovs asserted that prayer takes humans into the web of relationship, "All prayer is social" (p. 85) through the act of praying there is recognition of dependency on God and others". Prayer to the God of all the earth means that the act of prayer brings the individual into relationship with all of life, "Intercessory prayer pulls us into the tow of God's connectedness to everything" (p. 92).

A similar theme can also be seen in the "Lament" prayers of the psalmist as interpreted by Brueggemann (1986a; Brueggemann, 1986b). These prayers are cries of anger and sadness which can also be recognised as an affirmation of the covenant relationship. The psalmist's act of complaint to God expresses a quality of faith that is based in a relationship with God. In this way, expressing anger and distress showed a confident awareness of the relationship with the God being so addressed. The God of the covenant relationship, was the God who was powerful to help in time of need. There

is within the lament, a reframing of the present difficult situation, a reminder that God is, and that this God is the God of the covenant who has helped in the past. Brueggemann (1986a, 1986b) regarded the Psalms of lament as statements of faith which helped the psalmist to cope with the difficult experiences of life. This is similar to the psychological understanding of appraisal discussed by Lazarus (1994). The lament acts to reappraise the situation as part of the relationship with God, giving the psalmist courage to cope. As God is appraised as being part of the difficult life experience, the experience is viewed in a different, wider and more positive context.

The Ulanovs (1982) concluded their exploration of the meaning and function of prayer with an examination of the stages of prayer from the Christian mystical tradition. The first stage was "purgation", the open confession like "the slow shedding of skins of psychoanalytic talk therapy" (p. 111). Next came the "illuminative" process, "we are what we are and we are content to be" (p. 111) this is the step of surrender. The final stage was that of "transfiguration" or "union" with God. These images of prayer from the mystical tradition have been considered in the section relating to spirituality (Dreyer, 1989; Hederman, 1999; Lawrence, 1982; Mc Intosh,1998).

The image of prayer is portrayed as *From Cry to Word* in the book edited by Godin (1968). In the editorial, Godin, likened prayer to the cry of a baby who cries for its milk, but in reality needs far more than milk. The child needs the wholeness of its mother's love and guidance leading to wider and wider relationships beyond the time when it can find milk for itself. For Godin, "essentially prayer is union with God" (p. 19), a call to the divine "Other" that seeks to find a different attitude, in order to see life and events from a different point of view. The example given by Godin, is in relation to

death: "he triumphed over death not by altering the fact of death, but by giving that fact

an ultimate meaning" (p. 20).   This has strong resonance with the "appraisal" of stress in

the coping literature of Lazarus (1991) which will be considered in a following section of

this thesis.   Therefore from the work of the Ulanovs (1982), Godin (1968) and

Brueggemann (1990) prayer from the Christian tradition can be discussed in terms of

contemporary psychological understanding.

Relationship between Prayer and the Image of God

The Ulanovs (1982) asserted that prayer was entwined with the image of God.

The "image of God" was considered as part of the psychological understanding of Freud

(p. 28) and Melanie Klein (p. 2).   In the understanding of psychodynamic psychology,

God was viewed as a "primary transitional object", an extension of the relationship with

the mother and later the father (Wulff, 1997, p. 320).   Development can take place as the

child constantly adjusts his/her relationship with this idiosyncratic image of God as an

object.   Both Rizzuto (1979) and Winnicott (1953) used the term "transitional space" to

refer to ideas or images of the God representation that were used and updated.   They

considered that the image of God acted as a resource for the child when encountering

new challenges in life.   This is part of the understanding of Object Relations Theory that

is expressed graphically by Rizzuto (1979): "no child arrives at the 'house of God'

without his (or her) pet god under his (or her) arm" (p. 8).   That is, all children have an

image of God that is a "transitional object" helping them to meet and assess new ideas

and demands in life.

David Heller (1986) researched the question of the image of God with children

from Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Hindu backgrounds.   The images of God were

shown to be influenced by the religious traditions in which the children were nurtured, but at the same time their images still maintained some aspects of idiosyncratic understanding.

Heller (1986) used many creative activities in his interview protocol. Drawing, discussion, drama and writing tasks were all combined to yield data showing the image of God as an important part of the life of his participants. There were differences in relation to the age, gender, personality and the faith tradition of the home, but underlying these differences there was a strong sense of children knowing and relating to an image of God. Heller's work was focused primarily on the image of God but one of his activities involved children writing a letter to God. This letter writing (or prayer) also showed a dynamic dual connection with community of faith and the personal life of the participants.

Duffy (2002) linked her investigation with the work of Heller (1986). She concluded that there was evidence that prayer conducted in secondary schools was "having a positive impact on students. This implies that they are also relevant to the needs and life experiences of the students . . . leading young people to think about God" (p. 234). Duffy (2002) proposed that young people had an ever expanding image of God that affected their prayer.

This section of the literature review has noted aspects of the nature and function of prayer that will be used in the discussion of results. It has shown that in all three traditions, Islam, Judaism and Christianity, there are basic similarities in the understanding of prayer's nature and function, while there are also some evident

differences.   To understand this relationship, selected literature relating to the nature of prayer from the different faith traditions are now reviewed.

Viewpoints on Prayer from the Christian Theological Tradition

The Christian theologian Karl Rahner (1958) defined prayer as "The raising of the heart and mind to God . . . it is the food we feed our souls" (p.8).   Although Rahner's work was devotional and theological in character, it linked positively with the psychological emphasis of much of the literature reviewed above.   Rahner emphasised the sense of helplessness and aloneness as "existential realities" expressed in prayer. Prayer was a natural form of reaching to God rather than a set requirement.   This was prominent in the Christian cry of "Abba", the longing for the embrace of a personal loving parent.   "Deep in the heart . . . is the longing, fitfully glimpsed and but half realized, to gather up all these strivings into an intense pursuit of one all-embracing objective worthy of the toil and tears and devotion" (Rahner, 1958, P. 7).

Rahner (1958) viewed prayer as the struggle to find meaning and resolution in life.   Prayer gave an ability to accept the unknown and to aid the voice of conscience as part of the search for truth.   As humans faced death prayer was the final response available (p. 107).

The relationship between the image of God and the activity of prayer was considered by Schaller (1990) and Soares-Prabhu (1990).   In their work, asking and thanking as aspects of prayer, were seen to interrelate.   Schaller (1990) believed that to make a request of someone, particularly in relation to a deep spiritual need (as in personal grief or the need for forgiveness) implied "mutual trust" (p. 2).   At the same time as acknowledging need and dependence, the praying person was expressing the faith and

hope of the prayer's fulfilment.   So the relationship with a God, who has, through the faith tradition, blessed people by showing care and love, is the God to whom the petitions are addressed.   Similarly Soares-Prabhu (1990) viewed petition and praise as common elements in both the Jewish and Christian traditions.   He emphasised that the Christian image of God as "Abba" (Daddy) gave to Christian prayer intimacy and sense of the caring connection with God.   He also acknowledged that Christian prayer could be in danger of becoming passive or fatalistic, but when praying for "the Kingdom of God" to come, it always related to the challenge of present experience "The kingdom of God is both a gift and a task" (p. 42).   This was reminiscent of the politically motivated use of prayer by Elliott (1985) where praying for the Kingdom of God was a link to a recognition of personal guilt and responsibility for others.   Moltmann (1976) expressed a similar action/ reflection paradox.   Praying "thy Kingdom come" led to the task of justice in the kingdom of God; that is to find "Peace with God means conflict in the world, because the goad of the promised future stabs into the flesh of the unfulfilled present" (p. 325).

Viewpoints from the Islamic Tradition

For prayer, as commonly understood in literature from the Islamic tradition the ritual pattern given by the prophet Mohammad is very important (Abul ala Maududi, 1982, p. 129).   "Salat", daily prayer is one of the five pillars of Islam, an expression of surrender to God (Abul ala Maududi, 1982).   Although prayer should be a matter of the heart and deep intention, the correct physical actions and words were regarded as essential.

From the Isalmic tradition, Raji al Faruqi (1992a) stated that prayer was the supreme human duty in the proclamation of the "oneness of God", and this was reflected in the prayer ritual. "Al Tawhid" is the philosophical concept of the oneness of God given expression in the prayers of the prophet Mohammad. Raji al Faruqi (1992) believed that Islam was the purest form of affirmation of the quality of the transcendent oneness of God, a final development of the "Semitic consciousness" (p. 21).

The greatness of God seen in the ritual of prayer was proposed by Abdalati (1996). He considered that the strict ritual of prayer was a serious obligation, a "foundation of religion . . . every muscle of the body joins the soul and the mind in the worship and glory of God" (p. 56). According to Abdalati there is an emphasis on the correct performance of prayer which is associated with showing proper respect to God. Prayer would not be considered valid if the washing rituals were incomplete, or the place or clothing were unclean, or if the clothing was inappropriate, if there was no declared intention, or if the prayer was not performed towards Mecca. Prayer was viewed as a strict obligation and a means of gaining virtue, and any Muslim who failed to pray the required five times a day "without a reasonable excuse is committing a grave offense and a heinous sin" (Abdalati, 1996, p. 55).

Viewpoints from the Jewish Tradition

From the Jewish tradition, Donin (1980) pointed out the centrality of the Siddur, the Hebrew prayer book. Prayer was recognised as a complex form of deep ritual and an obligation. But as a well as being an obligation, prayer was also a feeling of wanting "to reach out to talk to my Father in Heaven" (p. 3). Through the Siddur, prayer was seen as a connection with the history of the people. Donin (1980) stated that the three Jewish

prayer times each day were linked to the times of the sacrificial offering in the Temple. Therefore the ritual from the ancestors was viewed as a large part of the Jewish pattern of prayer taught in present day Jewish schools.

Images of prayer from the Jewish tradition were linked to psychological understanding. The Talmudic Scholar and psychiatrist Abraham Twerski (2001) identified the root meaning of the word "tefillah" (translated as "prayer") as "To bond" (p. 8). As God had given the Torah to humans so in the tradition of the bilateral communication of the covenant, humans give Tefillah to God. The word "Tefillah" also has the meaning of "judgment' or "disputation" (p. 16). The act of prayer was described as a form of concentration seeking clear thought, getting past all of the clutter of everyday experience to a place of honesty and truth. The Talmud states, "God desires the dedication of the heart" (p. 36), and this is the attitude that Twerski asserted is needed in attention to the Siddur (prayer book). Although the prayers were ancient they took a variety of forms. The early morning prayer of the patriarch Abraham (Shacharis) speaks of "the light of dawn" (p.504). The second prayer of the day of the patriarch Isaac (Minchah) has a steady strength as of the light of midday. The final prayer of the day, Jacob's prayer (Maariv), reflects the darkness and distress of his life (p. 505). These three major prayers therefore were considered to have an ability to meet different areas of need. Weisel (1996) also spoke of prayer as an act of faith lived out in different life experiences. "As in other traditions prayer responds to a need - to man's need to understand and be understood, to speak and be heard, to sing, to believe, to remember, to share, to dream to worship" (p. 6)

From this wide selection of authors, prayer is seen as connected to the image of a God of goodness and care.   Phipps (1996) suggested many similarities between the prayer life of Muhammad and Jesus and when analysing the other literature, these links included the prayers of Judaism.   Brueggeman (1986a) considered that the covenant relationship of the Jews with God led to the intimacy where anger can be expressed.   In the psalms, hurt was articulated in prayer, and this expression then moved to submission and finally relinquishment, a very similar pattern to that of the Christian mystics (á Kempis, 1981; Hederman, 1999; Nouwen, 1972).   There were similarities exhibited in the attitude of praise and acknowledgment of the greatness of God.

The image of God as immanent or transcendent is complex in relation to prayer from each of the religious traditions.   According to Soares- Prabhu (1990) the Christian image of God as "Abba", the loving parent, gave an appreciation of an immanent God which was held in tension with the transcendent dimension.   Prayer in Judaism follows a complex prayer ritual involving a greater image of the transcendent God.   Islam extends the transcendent image of God, seeing God as completely Other, with a need to approach the holy God in a very formalized manner (Raji al Faruqi, 1992).   Through the prayer ritual the image of the Judge is held in tension with the caring creator.

The complexity of these differences is acknowledged by the researcher.   When approaching the participants in the interviews it is intended that all views of prayer will be accepted and respected, and that the relationship between views of prayer and the participant's image of God as mediated through their tradition would be acknowledged.

The table below gives a summary of some of the literature on prayer from the three selected traditions found in the schools used in the study.   Although it is not

possible to cover the wide range of theological difference and similarities, a selection of

categories from the literature will be useful for the interpretation of data later in the

thesis.

Table 2.1 :
Christian, Jewish and Muslim similarities in the understanding of prayer

Views on prayer – Similarities	*Christian Jewish and Muslim*	*References*
	▪ Image of One God – creator giver of guide to good living compassionate healer one who forgives ▪ Prayer is ordained by God ▪ Prayer is designed to help humans ▪ Faith leaders all prayed ▪ Sincere intention to pray is necessary	Phipps (1996) Twerski (2001) Coleman(1999) Brueggemann (1986a) Victorian Islamic College (*Basic principles of Islam*, 2002)

Table 2.2 :
Christian, Jewish and Muslim differences in the understanding of prayer

	Christian	*Jewish*	*Muslim*	*References*
Image of God	Image of God as transcendent – lower emphasis	Image of God as transcendent – moderate emphasis	Image of God as transcendent – higher emphasis	Raji al Faruqi (1992b) Coleman (1999)
Ritual	Lower need for ritual actions	Higher need for ritual actions	Higher need for ritual actions	Abdalati (1996) Donin (1980)
Traditional forms	Some proper words from the tradition– "Our Father…"	Many proper words from the tradition	Many proper words from the tradition	Abdalati (1996) Soares- Prabhu (1990) Twerski (2001)
Language	Any language	Preference for Hebrew	Preference for Arabic	Raji al Faruqi(1992b) Donin (1980)
Clothing	Clothing is not mentioned	Some clothing regulations for males	Many clothing regulations for females	Coleman (1999)

Time	Prayer encouraged but not regulated Corporate prayer on Sunday	Prayer three times a day Corporate prayer on the Saturday (or Friday evening)	Prayer five times a day Corporate prayer on Friday	Donin (1980) Minaret College (2002) Rahner (1968)
Leadership	Mixed views on leadership gender	Male leadership in mixed gender group	Male leadership in mixed gender group	Coleman (1999) Donin (1980) Abdulati (1996)

Part 3 - Review of Literature on Religious Education

Religious education literature has been reviewed because it is considered that religious education will influence both the experience of prayer and education in prayer for the participants.   Secondly, knowledge of the literature will provide some understanding of the different experiences participants may have had through religious education.   Finally when the data has been analysed, the literature will provide a context in which implications for religious education can be discussed and presented.

It is recognised that children's perception of the meaning and function of prayer is influenced by a range of educational factors, such as the religious practices of the home, local worship centre, school and the general perceptions from the culture. The faith and practices of the home have been demonstrated through research to be a major influence on the use of prayer for children (Groome, 1998).   The understanding through worship practices in a faith community for children are also recognised as a major influence (Berryman, 1991; Liddy and Welbourne, 1999; Strommen, 1993).

In the Australian situation, the two educating influences of home and school can be supplemented through the choice of a school related to the faith orientation of the family.   Approximately one third of children in the state of Victoria attend schools

established by various religious traditions.   These schools, to varying degrees, have religious education classes, and religious practices.   The remaining two thirds of children attend government schools that are governed by legislation requiring a secular education. In the state of Victoria, where this research was conducted, the class teacher is not permitted to teach religion, but Religious Education is permitted in the school as a non-compulsory subject taught by voluntary teachers who come into the schools as representatives of the churches/religions.   For many of the students who indicate a Christian affiliation accredited voluntary teachers, using an agreed Christian syllabus are permitted to teach a half hour lesson each week.   Usually, students who are Catholic, Orthodox or Jewish have separate classes conducted by volunteers representing their traditions.   Provision is made for other religious groups to have similar access into primary schools to teach religion (Council for Christian Education in Schools, 2002).

This study has selected participants from a variety of independent schools that have been established by faith traditions and one school from the government school system.   All participants experienced some form of religious education through their school.   Each independent school taught religion from the perspective of its own tradition, in the Government school Christian religious education was presented from the agreed denominational syllabus of the Council for Christian Education in Schools.   The observation notes in Appendix C provide detail of the religious education and religious practices for each school.

It is beyond the scope of this literature review, to investigate the educational influences of the home or worship community, but the influence of the educational environment of the school in relation to teaching prayer through religious education will

be briefly examined.   It is anticipated that the religious education of the school, including the actual practice of prayer, may have an influence on the perception of prayer by the participants.   While the religious schools have community prayer and, or worship, as a part of their communal life, this would not be present in the government school; however, within the voluntary denominational religious education, offered in the government school, students could experience the practice of prayer.

This section will first review literature relating to spiritual development as a general educational objective.   Then literature on theoretical perspectives in teaching religious education is reviewed, and finally curriculum and pedagogical issues are considered.   It is not intended that this should be a complete review of literature on religious education, but rather a selection that will aid the interview process and the analysis of findings from the research reported in this thesis.   The literature reviewed was largely concerned with the teaching of religion from the Christian tradition, but it is proposed that some generalization can be made that would be relevant to religious education in schools from the other faith traditions.   This literature review will inform the later discussion of findings and recommendations.

Spiritual Development as an Educational Objective
The recommendations of the UNESCO report (Delores et al., 1996) were summarised in the previous chapter of this thesis.   The report entitled *Learning-The Treasures Within*, summarised the aims of world education as: a) learning to know, b) learning to do, c) learning to live together, and d) learning to be.   To "live together" and "to be" were considered to require more than an economic, "utilitarian" vision of life.   In speaking about the spiritual dimension of education, the report said: "the world has a

longing, often unexpressed, for an ideal and for values . . . paying full respect to pluralism . . . to lift their minds and spirits to the universal and in some measure to transcend themselves.   It is no exaggeration on the commission's part to say that the survival of humanity depends thereon" (p. 18).   This view is supported in the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (2004) where development of spirituality is placed as a right for all children, beside other aspects of development such as physical, intellectual and moral development.

The United Nations reports are not isolated recommendations.   The British Government in 1996 set up a national conference on Spiritual and Moral Education.   The investigation of Hay (1998) was a response both to this conference and to the practical needs of teachers trying to deal with spiritual education.   de Souza (2003) is of the opinion that Australia has only just started to take spirituality and moral education seriously.   Rossiter (1984) stated that there were different policies towards education in spirituality between the secular policy of Government schools and the teaching of religion in Church schools.   This was further complicated by different legislation in different states in relation to how the "secular" emphasis in education related to teaching about religion.   Rossiter noted that there have been various government reports recommending the development of spirituality and values associated with religion through the government schools system.   A recent example of this was the *Agreed Minimum Values Framework* (1995) produced by the National Professional Development Program of Western Australia which identified shared spiritual and religious values, democratic and educational values.   This document was written with the assistance of consultants from different faith traditions, and provided guidance for

curriculum design across all subject areas.   The *Agreed Minimum Values Framework* is one example of reports written in Australia which have advocated the need for the development of spirituality as an educational aim.   This study, investigating the perception of prayer, can be considered to relate to education in spirituality and will contribute further to the Australian interest in the value of education for spirituality.

In addition it should be noted that many religious educators speak of the development of spirituality as a central aspect of teaching in their subject.   Groome (1998), writing as a Christian educator, considered spirituality as the relationship with God (as well as with the self, others and the environment).   As prayer is experienced, there is a "gaze of faith" (p. 153), a "centering down" into that relationship.   Liddy and Welbourne (1999) wrote of experiences which foster spirituality within the religious education program, such as the practice of prayer in reflection, meditation, use of a mantra and ritual.   Many other authors also refer to the spiritual dimension of prayer as part of religious education (Berryman, 1999; Mc Creery, 1996; Mullino-Moore, 1991; Scheindlin, 1999).   Finally curriculum documents in religious education, also present ideas for prayer as reflective, spiritual activities (Engebretson and Rymarz, 2001,2002; Grant, 1998; Nancarrow, 2002)

Theoretical Perspectives in Religious Education

Faith-orientation and educational orientation in religious education
Rossiter (2004) has summarised two theoretical perspectives in religious education as the "faith-oriented" perspective and the "educational" perspective (p.1). The faith-oriented perspective has the purpose of religious education as faith development and the formation of a religious identity for the student.   The school aims to

hand on the religious faith tradition through knowledge, understanding and experiences related to their own particular faith tradition. The second educational perspective aims to place understanding of the place of religion in the context of culture, communal and personal meaning-making. This perspective develops knowledge and understanding of other religious traditions and non-religious world views. This second perspective is expressed by Smart cited in Grimmitt, "The aim of religious education is that of creating in pupils certain capacities to understand and think about religion" (Grimmitt, 1973, p. 27).

Although these two theoretical orientations to religious education are presented as alternatives, Rossiter (2004) stated that in schools sponsored by a religious tradition the faith-oriented aim of religious education does not exclude the educational aim, both can be promoted. However, in the government school it would be inappropriate to have faith-oriented aims. The schools represented in this study hold differing views on the importance and purpose of their religious education programs, some of these views are displayed in the observation notes in Appendix C.

Hill (1990) suggested that previously, the subject of religious education in Christian schools was called "Religious Instruction" and was considered a passing on of the authoritative tradition into which, unquestioningly, the child would grow. The sense of the divine revelation within the subject meant that criticism and debate in the teaching process were restricted. However contemporary religious educators have largely rejected this view, with an emphasis on student engagement and critical evaluation (Moran, 1989; O'Brien, 1999; Siejk, 1999). Education is considered as a process of enabling the student to use his/her own learning resources rather than a way to impose

ideas and concepts from the teacher (Russell,1997).   As part of Christian religious education in the government school sector, Rossiter (1984) referred to the code of ethics for the religion teacher, developed by Hill, which has been influential in this volunteer teaching system.   The ethical position recommended by Hill in the code of ethics is called "committed impartiality" (Rossiter, 1984, p.12).   The volunteer teacher is permitted to refer to his or her faith commitment as it relates to the lesson content. However, teachers take care that the teachings of the Church are not imposed, and consideration is given to other points of view.

The code of ethics can be seen to relate positively to Hill's (1990) definition of religious education

> Teaching which promotes understanding of the religious quest within oneself and others, familiarity with the religious traditions most important in one's cultural heritage, empathy with people whose beliefs are different from one's own, and dispositions both to adopt a personal position with regard to religion and to dialogue with others on religious issues. (p. 146)

To emphasise the contemporary position of religious education involving "maximum conscious involvement" from the student, Hill (1990) contrasted religious education with "conditioning", "drilling", "evangelism" and "indoctrination" to show the difference (p. 144).

Writing from the experience of religious education in the united States, Moran (1981) identified the need for a synthesis between the two disciplines of theology and education where the wisdom from the past of religion is held against the rational criticism or self-criticism, of modern education.   Theology is related to the religious

understanding or the faith-orientation of the community while education is a

contemporary discipline concerned "to lead forth or bring up" the potential of the student

(*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 575).   Moran (1981) suggested that courage and faith

were needed in this synthesis where religious people could "give themselves to the truth"

rather than "owning the truth" leading to a stronger "self critical religiousness" (p. 162).

Moran viewed this self-critical, multifaith awareness in religious education as a vital

foundation for the contemporary tasks of adult education, moral development and

education for justice in the world situation.

> Our world badly needs the passion and vision tempered by the forms and
>
> rationality of education. Religious emotions run high around the world . . . if the
>
> outlets for this force are not political and educational, then the result is bound to
>
> be violent . . . . Religious education is an idea whose time has arrived. (p.164)

The schools used in this study were observed to hold different viewpoints in the

complex negotiation between the authority of the tradition and the authority of learner-

centred educational methods.   The ways in which religious education in these different

school settings influence the participants' understanding of prayer will be part of the

analysis and discussion of the finding in this thesis.

> *Religious education linked to developmental psychology and psychodynamic*
> *psychology*

When considering the theory which influences the delivery of religious education

in schools, an associated area of debate is explored by Nye (1996).   Nye suggested that,

from the original work of Piaget, the concepts of developmental psychology have had a

strong influence on educational theory.   She proposed that in the recent past, religious

education was considered a purely intellectual activity, and children, considered limited

in cognitive capacity, were given limited access to religious ideas and images. Cognitive

developmental psychology, emphasising the limitations of the child, led to theory in

religious education evident in the work of Ronald Goldman, James Fowler and later Fritz

Oser whom she said have "encouraged, if they have not fallen into, an ontological error

which has misled religious education over the last 30 years" (Nye, 1996, p.144). Against

the theory of cognitive developmental psychology, which largely viewed the child as

"deficient", Nye (1996) proposed that there is now an alternative psychodynamic or

psychoanalytic psychology which views the child as "rich" in inner wisdom. Nye

considered the growing awareness of children as spiritual beings, that is, having an inner

knowledge of God, allows religious education greater freedom to use a wider curriculum.

In this way religious education can be seen as a broad area of experience and

understanding for children, understanding beyond the confines of the cognitive

developmental stages used to determine curriculum content for other subjects in the

educational program.

Nye's work (1996) highlights a contentious issue. Education continues to be

directed by many aspects of developmental psychology, however, the concept of the

"richness" of the child within the educational setting is also evident (Groome, 1998;

Liddy and Welbourne, 1999; Russell, 1997). A respect for the inner resources of the

child rather that the image of the child as an "empty vessel" or "blank slate" is a

significant development in educational theory (Salzberger-Wittenberg, 1983). Perhaps,

as suggested by Brady (1996) contemporary religious educational theory is open to

include many different forms of understanding, including understanding from both developmental psychology and psychodynamic psychology

Development of the inner spirituality of children has been of concern in the education system in the United Kingdom. Nye (1996) and Hill (1990) expressed concern that the cognitive, intellectual, developmental emphasis in religious education should be held in balance with the spiritual development model. This will be explored further in the later section of this literature review which deals with pedagogy.

For this study, it is important to note the influence of theories of education informing the teaching of religion. Different schools will have different approaches and this may influence the perception and practice of prayer for the students. Some schools may be more instructional in the presentation of religious education and teaching in prayer, and some may have a greater appreciation of the intrinsic spiritual nature of the child. These differences will be part of the later discussion of findings and will form part of the interpretative context.

Curriculum design in religious education

Curriculum design in religious education is also in a state of change and ongoing debate (Engebretson and Rymarz, 2001, 2002). In Victoria, with a multicultural and multifaith awareness, much has been written about the need for an open academic approach to curriculum design in religious education (Rossiter, 2003). Rule and Engebretson (2001), drawing on the work of Habel and Moore (1982), proposed eight interrelated aspects of religion to enable students to compare different religious traditions. Curriculum design using these aspects, gave a strong conceptual framework which facilitated rational discussion and critical analysis. The aspects of a tradition proposed

were: beliefs, myths and story, sacred text, rituals, symbols, social structure, codes of behavior and religious experience.   This model has been used in the upper secondary religious education units of study which have been accredited by the Victorian Government as part of the qualification for entrance to tertiary institutions (Victorian Board of Studies 1999) and it has influenced primary curriculum design in many independent schools (Burritt and Mountain, 2000).

Using a similar approach, Vardy (2002), proposed a five strand model to guide the curriculum in religious education.   Vardy's model, reflecting the British system, has five interrelated strands of focus in the curriculum, these are: sacred story, religious traditions, ethics, philosophy and the affective domain. This model has been used in many primary independent schools in Australia.

Of particular interest to this research is the recognition of the important place of the spiritual seen in the affective, or experiential aspects of these curriculum frameworks. Although different schools approach the spiritual dimension of the religious education curriculum in different ways, it remains a part of the curriculum where meditation and prayer are experienced and considered.

Curricula used in schools in this study.
A review of three Christian religious education curricula influential in the schools of this study (Grant; 1998 - GS, Nancarrow;2002 - IS, Engebretson and Rymarz; 2001, 2002 - CS) showed common features.   The teaching material was graded to suit different developmental stages and abilities of the students, with curriculum resources produced in age related grades.   There was an attempt to reframe the old tradition: there was contemporary language, images and application to life, the stories from the tradition were

often linked to contemporary images and activities, interactive learning was encouraged using many forms of technology.   All curricula made some reference to other faith traditions in a respectful manner.   Of significance to this study, each curriculum encouraged students to examine, understand and use prayer.

From the examination of the foregoing curricula, it seems likely that children's spiritual awareness of prayer could be influenced by the school's religious education program.   It is anticipated from the observation notes and an examination of curriculum that prayer will have a place in the academic teaching and experiences of school for the participants.

Pedagogy in Religious Education

As well as curriculum planning, the methods employed in teaching religious education also relate to the theoretical discussion.   Modern learning theories influenced by both developmental psychology and psychodynamic psychology are part of the literature on religious education pedagogy.

Pedagogy, in the current educational trend, reflects an emphasis on "active" learning (Berryman, 1991; Hill, 1990).   Teachers aim for interaction with students on a variety of levels and in different ways.   Story-telling, discussion, drama, art work, writing, film, video, research, presentation, group work and music are all employed according to the age and ability of the students.   There is a dual emphasis, with child-centred learning held in tension with the demand to present ideas from the subject.   The curriculum outlines of Grant (1998), Nancarrow (2002) and Engebretson and Rymarz; (2001, 2002) highlighted this pedagogical style.

As a style of teaching, Scheindlin (1999) emphasised the need to value the inner life of the child and build on the child's early experience of wonder.   As these feelings, experiences and aesthetic sensitivities were valued the child was encouraged to develop spiritually.   This form of pedagogy necessitated specialized relational skills from the teacher (Mullino-Moore, 1991).   There must be sensitivity to the individual child's experiences and a willingness and ability to enter into the spiritual places of imagination, wonder, curiosity and religious ritual (Scheindlin, 1999).   The link between pedagogy and the nurture of spirituality is related to this research as it is anticipated that participants will experience different forms of religious education.   It is probable that some school systems will nurture the inner spiritual life of the child more than others. The literature related to sensitivity to the inner ideas of the child, has also been influential in the design and implementation of the interview protocol for this research.   Respect will be given to the ideas of each participant.

Berryman (1991) made special reference to the imagination in his theory for religious education.   Working from the Montessori methods of engagement with children, Berryman used story, creative play, wonder and laughter to engage the spiritual imagination of children.   Once again, the sense of connection showing respect for the child is a key feature of the pedagogy.   He used an image of the teacher as an "artist", where the goal was not to overcome life, changing the life of the child, but "to co-operate with life in love" (p. 156).   Berryman summarised the "games" played in different areas of life.   In the "Scientific game" the key words are "is" or "probably is", in the "ethics game" the word is "ought", in the "art game" the word is "pretend", in the "game of law" the word is "aught", but in the "game of religion" the word is "wow".   The teacher and

child shared this game, the experience of wonder and awe as a foundation for religious education exists in the relationship where both student and teacher are amazed at the divine "Other". Berryman (1999) also emphasised the need to teach and model silence as part of the religious teaching and learning experience.

For the present study, understanding different pedagogical styles used in different schools was considered to have possible implications for the students' understanding and use of prayer shown in the data. An awareness of different forms of pedagogy was also relevant in the formation of the interview protocol to enable the participants to interact freely with the researcher. Finally pedagogical considerations are part of the context for analysis of data in this research.

Part 4 - Understanding the Contemporary Australian Cultural Context - Secularisation

Definition and Evaluation of Secularisation

Bouma (2002, p. 2) stated "Australia is a secular society in that its constitution privileges no religion, it describes itself as secular to other nations and it has a high level of institutionalised distrust of religious organisations". This is amplified in the ideas of the secular society as one in which there is no longer a "monopolistic control" of religion or spirituality through the traditional organisations. The patterns of immigration from England, Europe, then Asia and the Middle East into Australia and the strong influence of materialism and economic rationalism are all part of the contemporary picture of the growth of secularization.

A brief analysis of the Australian census figures of religious affiliation shows the trend towards increasing secularisation. The membership of the established traditions of the Anglican Church and those Churches making up the Uniting Church of Australia

appear to have declined in 2001 to about half of the percentage of the population that was the case in 1947. Although the affiliation with the Catholic Church has risen from 20% to 26%, during this same period, the total percentage of those nominating to belong to a Christian religion has fallen from 88% of the population to 68%. Although these figures show a general decline in Christian affiliation, the figures of 2001 show a significant rise in affiliation to the new groups "Pentecostal" 0.7%, and "Christian" 1.7%. The census of 2001 demonstrated that the proportion of membership to religions other than Christian to have risen. The proportions of the population in different faiths were: Buddhism 1.9%, Muslim 1.55, Hindus 0.5 and Jews 0.4% of the population. The category of "Other", that is other than the traditional Christian, Hindu, Jewish and Muslim affiliation also showed an increase to 0.5% of the population.

Bouma (2002) pointed out the fact that those claiming "no religion" rose from 0.3% of the population in 1947 to 16.5% in 1996 but then has shown a decline to 15.5% in 2001. The sharp rise from 0.3 % in 1947 to 16.5% in 1947 was anticipated to continue as part of the secularisation of Australia. However the figure dropped to 15.5% in 2001. From these figures Bouma concluded "Postmodern societies like Australia are characterized not by irreligion and disbelief, but by a rise in spiritualities not controlled by religious organisations, spiritualities beyond the scope of churches, mosques, temples and synagogues" (p. 6). These census figures have influenced the methodology and the design of the interview protocol of the present study. With awareness of the decline in affiliation with the church or formal religion, it was anticipated that prayer might not be widely practiced or valued by some children. Aspects of the interview protocol were

designed to recognize that non-belief and non-practise of prayer were acceptable responses.

Fenn (2001) noted that the conformity of a society to a "civil religion" is a form of idolatry, an "attempt to enshrine the social order in a timeless universe: an ancient strategy for providing guarantees, setting rules, limiting knowledge, and legitimating sacrifice" (p. 8). He considered that the secular society was open to a wide range of possibilities:

> they include a wide range of influences and dangers, threats and disasters, from infection and infestation to invasion and the loss of sovereignty over the self or over one's society. In their totality they constitute the Sacred with a capital S. A truly secular society is wholly open to the Sacred (p. 5).

Fenn considered that the life of first century Christianity existed in this secular framework. This was a time with less religion in terms of organisation and more faith that could embrace a life of risk and uncertainty in a world with no guarantees. For Fenn, the movement towards the secular, which he saw involving many if not most nations, is a positive move towards a global human community. Although there is risk and uncertainty when traditional religious institutions and authorities are minimised, there is at the same time a rise in the possibility of joining the secular and the sacred. This view is shared by a number of Christian scholars, who see Christian hope in the universal recognition of God not restricted to one faith tradition (McIntosh, 1998; O'Murchu, 2002; Spong, 2001).

A similar understanding is expressed by Tarnas (1996). He viewed the rising secular nature of postmodern society as now being recognised as a "positive religious

development" (p. 404). With a greater sense of personal quest and responsibility a "more authentic experience of the numinous" (p. 404) was emerging. As individuals gained greater freedom to search for God rather than following a set tradition, there was resurgence in religious thought and experience. This was linked to a greater intellectual openness to religious discussion, with multiple options being considered acceptable as part of the human struggle to make meaning of the nature of human existence (Houtman and Mascini, 2003).

Another viewpoint is expressed by Hervieu-Leger (2000) who considered the implications of secular contemporary society no longer valuing the collective memory of tradition. As the collective traditional religious base is corroded a vacuum of meaning or "utopian space" (p. ix) emerges, that only religion can fill. Secularisation, from this perspective, can be considered both as decline in the formal traditional expression of religion but at the same time, a positive renewal of religious discussion. The new forms of spirituality or religiosity which emerge are associated both with the postmodern scepticism of the traditional institutions and with a quest for a deeper universal spirituality (Houtman and Mascini, 2003; Moffett, 1994).

Hay (1998) did not share the optimism of Fenn (2001), Tarnas (1996), Hervieu-Leger (2000), as regards the impact of secularisation. In his work *The Spirit of the Child*, Hay viewed secularisation as "the declining influence and power of the religious institutions since the European Renaissance" (p. 24). Although Hay viewed spirituality as an innate capacity, following from the work of Alister Hardy (1979) discussed earlier, he saw the scientific instruction given to children in the early teens as detrimental to spirituality. He saw "the 'blotting out' of spirituality as a socially constructed

phenomenon" (p. 50).   Spirituality as the original human state can suffer with the scientific attitude of religious scepticism rather than a religious respect.   He concluded that education should be developed which countered the scepticism of the secular, and instead affirmed spirituality.   Hay (1998) recognised the need for spiritual respect in education as essential for the well-being of the child and on a larger scale as a source of social integration (p. 175).   By extension, as religious traditions are entwined with spirituality, respect in education should be given to religious studies.

An alternative viewpoint is expressed by Bridger (2003).   Writing from the experience in the United Kingdom she considered the possibility that the rise of interest in spirituality is part of the secular, postmodern, consumer society, "a sociological phenomenon rather than a purely religious one" (p. 4).   She names the postmodern spiritual "seekers" as "sensation-gatherers" who look for "the instant satisfaction of the shopping mall" (p.3).   Bridger (2003) agrees with Fenn (2001) and Hervieu- Leger (2000) in his understanding that the contemporary western society has moved beyond the modern certainty of science and rational objectivism.   The point in debate is whether postmodern secularism, with the new emphasis on spirituality, is related necessarily to a deeper religious quest.

Robert Kegan (1994) offered an understanding of contemporary society, in his book entitled *In Over Our Heads-the Mental Demands of Modern Life*.   He stated "I am trying to gain a glimpse of the psychological curve of modern life" (p. 76).   This work extended the earlier work where Kegan (1982) identified development as the process of evolution or adaptation of the human-being.   Children strive to make meaning from their ever widening environment with a "lifelong tension between the yearning for inclusion

and distinctiveness" (p. 108).   The pattern is like a pendulum or a helix which moves

back and forth between the two aspects of being, inclusion and distinctiveness, with each

developmental balance still being slightly imbalanced.   The levels of development are

expressed by Kegan as different "orders of consciousness" (p. 314).   Kegan's writing

(1994) examined the demands of current social life.   He considered that most of the adult

population were struggling to meet the demands of "fifth order consciousness", the

mental demands of postmodern life, seen in finding a new form of understanding that

focused on working "trans-ideologically" or living with paradox (p. 314).   The struggle

to move into this higher form of consciousness was displayed in the number of adult

North Americans engaged in formal activities aimed at self expansion.   The number so

engaged was almost equal to the number who work.

The movement into a higher order of consciousness in contemporary society

(Kegan, 1994) can be related to the understanding of the postmodern mind by Tarnas

(1991).   Tarnas considered that contemporary western society had moved from the

acceptance of social and religious structures into a situation where individuals now take

greater responsibility for self-transformation and their own spiritual quest.   This

viewpoint is shared by Spong (2001) who spoke of the current movement as "post-

theistic" (p. 242).   The theistic image of God, as a masculine being, favoring some and

killing others, doing super natural wonders, is "no longer big enough to be the God of this

world" (p. 10).   Spong believes a new Christianity is being called forth in this age,

Christianity as an experience of God rather than a dogmatic, hierarchical knowledge

about God.   He considered that this will involve a new conception of prayer that does not

involve human demands on God, but rather a centering into God's being.   Spong's

attitude to the secularization of society is positive, he sees that as the religious traditions weaken there is opportunity for humans to come together "there is only one God-filled humanity, wonderfully diverse, yearning to live, eager to love, daring to be" (p.245).

There is a further link with the writing of O'Murchu (2002) who considered the evolving consciousness of our time as an awareness of the essential oneness of all, "the universe is a great relational matrix" (p. 200). For O'Murchu, this new consciousness was an evolutionary leap of the "benevolent creation, an adventure poised towards life and possibility" leading to a time where instead of following "survival of the fittest" there will be a new order for humans "survival of the gentlest" (p. 204). However, there is difficulty in making this evolutionary leap of consciousness, O'Murchu sees the present state as one of "non- equilibrium" (p. 199).

As part of the difficulty in moving into a higher order of consciousness in the adult population, Kegan (1994) recognised a diminishing ability to engage fully in the important task of child rearing. David Elkind's (1994, p.4) concern for a "hurried childhood", was cited by Kegan. Children were seen to be at a disadvantage in the current society where adults valued and encouraged accelerated development. Kegan (1994) stated that children need a sensitive awareness from their parents of the need for both support and challenge. If parents are unable to meet this need there is danger of impoverished development, either in terms of children becoming defensive and constricted on the one hand or devitalised on the other. A similar concern regarding the need for nurture in childhood was expressed by Brazelton and Greenspan (2000).

There is concern expressed by many involved in student welfare in contemporary society (Deveson, 2003; Withers and Russell, 2001). As previously stated many

involved in child-welfare are considering the development of protective factors and resilience as educational initiatives.   This study of children and prayer seeks to determine the ways in which prayer is perceived to function for the child.   It is possible that prayer as one aspect of spirituality could be helpful in opening up the higher "consciousness" of which Kegan writes (1994, p. 315).

Concern for the well-being of the Child – Coping and Resilience
Withers (2001) suggested that in contemporary Australian society, our physical health care system and educational opportunities would indicate a high possibility for the successful development of our children.   However, Withers (2001) sees a high proportion of Australian young people "at risk" with educational under achievement, drug abuse, delinquency or suicide.   The degree of risk is seen to relate to a complex mix between personal attributes like problem-solving skills or a sense of purpose, and communal social pressure seen in the gambling culture or the availability of drugs.   Mc. Whirter (1993) is cited by Withers as expressing the problem "so many are falling away – so many are at risk – that we might conclude that our society itself is at risk" (p. 10). The report stated that all young people are vulnerable to some extent, but certain individuals can be identified as more likely to be "at risk" (p. x).   On the other hand protective factors aiding resilience were identified.   No one simple model of assistance was recommended but rather a linking of resources between the family, school and community to foster resilience.

One of the research projects cited in Withers, is the work by Resnick, Harris and Blum (1993).   Arising from concern at the "shift from biological to social causes of morbidity and mortality among adolescents" (p. S3) the study of over 36,000 students

sought to identify protective factors. The study recognised both the "quietly disturbed" and the "acting out" behaviours of subjects as demonstrating risk. Resnick et al. concluded that a sense of caring and connectedness was the dominant protective factor for resilience in young people. The greatest protective factor was seen to be a sense of connectedness in the experience of the adolescent "to at least one caring, competent adult in a loving, nurturing relationship" (p. S6). This caring adult was first seen as a family member and secondly as a teacher. The report also claimed that "unfortunately, the presence of nurturing relationships between adults and children cannot be treated as a given . . . youth disaffection and alienation are seen as a growing by-product of postmodern society" (p. S4). If the sense of connectedness with a caring adult was not present the research indicated that a sense of spirituality could function as a protective factor.

The *Risk and Protective Factors Survey* conducted in Victoria (1999) supported the findings of Resnic et al. Four areas of protection were identified by the subjects. Community opportunities for involvement and rewards, school opportunities for involvement and rewards, family connectedness and opportunities for involvement and rewards and finally peer/individual aspects of religiosity, social skills and belief in a moral order. For this study it should be noted that of the ten protective factors listed, two relate to a religious attitude and all relate to the definition of spirituality as "relational consciousness".

Finally the extensive literature on coping is reviewed as part of the context for the present study. Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) regarded coping as grounded in the emotional life of humans. The emotions are considered to be the products of personal

meaning, which work with intelligence as vital tools for adaptation, allowing the organism to move into new experiences and ways of living. The demands of the environment on the individual cause negative emotions of stress with the need to find a mechanism for coping. Coping has been defined by Lazarus (1991) as the "cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage the specific external and internal demands . . . that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (p. 112). The central focus of a lifetime of research by Lazarus has been concerned with understanding the overlapping concepts of coping and appraisal. He considered that there are many factors: cognition, experience, social understanding and relationship, involved in the ongoing process of appraisal and reappraisal. These are all related to the individual's ability to cope.

According to Frydenberg (1999) much of the current understanding has originated in behavioural psychology. From the traditional stimulus/response (S-R) understanding there has developed a three-phase process S-O-R, that is, stimulus through various organismic variables to response. That meant response to the stimulus was not automatic, the organism was in dynamic interplay with the situation. Frydenberg (1999) considered there were aspects of genetic predisposition involved in determining the response but, it seems more importantly, a wide range of psycho-social learning. In this way the education system was viewed as vital in enabling children to develop coping mechanisms. The emphasis on learning recognised that the organism was directly involved in appraising what was happening to them in life.

The question remains as to where people in our society find the ability to cope. Pargament (1997) has conducted an extensive review of over 280 empirical studies which

identify religion as a coping mechanism. These studies were largely conducted on the adult American population. Although Pargament pointed out that religion is more than a coping mechanism, and coping is more than a religious phenomenon, he concluded that there is a positive connection, "Religion deserves greater recognition and attention than it has in the coping literature" (p. 312). In the concluding section of his book he outlined some possibilities for taking his research further. He noted the need for longitudinal study and greater attention to transformative types of coping found in religion. He also noted the need for investigating forms of coping related to spirituality in children.

The emphasis on the function of prayer in this study is designed through different questions in the interview protocol to encourage the subjects to consider how prayer might be used by people. From Pargament's work (1997) there is the possibility that prayer might be one form of coping. To listen to children and hear their stories will provide a way to investigate this possibility.

Conclusion

As can be seen from the literature reviewed in this chapter the topic of the perception of the meaning and function of prayer by children is an area of research which has received little academic attention. Prayer can be identified as part of the concept of spirituality, and literature on spirituality was reviewed to show this connection. Section one of this chapter reviewed relevant areas of research, both from Australia and overseas. Within Australia, research literature on spirituality was identified in the work of Mackay (1999),Crawford and Rossiter (1996), Engebretson (2001), Duffy (2002) and the Victorian Human Services (1999). Prayer was not the specific focus in any of these

research projects and most of the participants in the studies were in the adolescent age group.

International research similarly has shown limited attention to children as subjects for research when investigating prayer. Elkind Spilka and Long (1968) conducted research into the developmental changes that occur in children's understanding of prayer. Review of the research by Coles (1990), Heller (1986) and Hay (1998) was shown to have a relationship to the present study. Some use of prayer by children was noted by Coles (1990), Heller (1986) and Hay (1998), but in each case, spirituality and not prayer was the primary focus of the research. These various research projects have made a considerable contribution to the design and method used in the research reported in this thesis. They also provide a recognized academic framework for the analysis and discussion reported in chapters four, five and six of this thesis.

Section two of this chapter reviewed the wider literature which both informed the present research and provided a context in which the findings could be discussed. Selected literature was reviewed from the areas of children's spirituality, religious psychology, religious education and education for resilience.

The definition of spirituality and consideration of spiritual development in children was addressed through the literature. The image of spirituality as an inner human resource was considered in the work of many authors such as Coles (1986), Hart (2002) and Hay (1998). This was related to the need for adult responsibility to nurture children's spirituality expressed by such authors as Hawkins (1996) and Berryman (1991). The link between spirituality and religion was also examined, as this had a connection to the subject of prayer (Mc Intosh, 1998). Prayer was considered to reside

in the definition of spirituality as "relational consciousness" (Hay, 1998, p. 113); a part of the relationship between a human and God.

The theological and psychological understanding of prayer was considered through a review of selected literature. The review of literature by Ulanov (1982) was linked to Brueggemann (1986) and Godin (1968) in consideration of the psychological aspects of prayer. This related to the aim of this research to understand the function of prayer for children. Prayer was also reviewed from literature suggested by the different schools involved in this study. Ideas of prayer from the Jewish (Twerski, 2001) and Muslim (Raji al Faruqi, 1992) traditions were considered as well as ideas about prayer from the Christian tradition (Rahner, 1958). Differences and similarities in relation to prayer were identified from the literature giving the researcher a context in which to understand and respect the views of participants coming from different religious traditions.

As it was anticipated that the participants in this study would receive different forms of religious education literature in this areas was reviewed. Consideration was given to aspects of theory, curriculum planning and pedagogy in religious education. Literature was reviewed largely in relation to Christian religious education, but many aspects of the discussion were considered to apply to other faith traditions. Consideration was given to the different forms of religious education experienced by the participants of the study. The faith-orientation was shown in tension with the educational orientation (O'Brien, 1999; Moran, 1989; Rossiter, 2004). Theory relating to psychological orientation in religious education was also discussed in relation to curriculum and pedagogy which could influence the perception of prayer held by the

participants (Berryman, 1991; Nye,1996).   Although a comprehensive review of literature on religious education was not intended, some context was provided through the reviews in this chapter for understanding the views of the participants and the interpretation of findings.

Finally, literature concerned with understanding the contemporary situation of secularisation in Australia, provided a further context for this research (Bouma, 2002, Tarnas, 1996, Fenn, 2001).   The information from the Australian census indicated that a considerable proportion of the population were not affiliated with any religious tradition. Therefore, in designing the interview protocol the possibility was noted that some children might not value prayer.   Other literature suggested that secularization might be associated with the development of new forms of spirituality, religious dialogue and forms of prayer (Mc Intosh, 1998; O'Murchu, 2002; Spong, 2001).   An attitude of awareness and respect for the contemporary culture was needed by the researcher to aid the data collection.   A consideration of the secularization of the society was also necessary in relation to the discussion of findings from the data.

The literature concerned with the well-being of children (Whithers, 2001; Victorian Human Services, 1999; Frydenberg, 1999; Pargament, 1997) added further understanding in which the findings of the research reported in this thesis could be interpreted.

In the following chapter the literature reviewed above can be seen to inform the choice of theoretical framework, and the design of the research method.   Other areas of literature related to the choice of methodology will also be reviewed in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE: THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Introduction

In the previous chapters the aims of the study have been established and consideration has been given to the relevance of this research to the understanding of children's spirituality and religious education.   The literature review has outlined related empirical research in Australia and beyond, which provides a context for this study. This chapter establishes the context for, justifies and outlines the methods used in data gathering and analysis.

Choice in Research Methods

The research questions relate to the perceptions of prayer by children in different schools in Melbourne.   The tasks of finding the meaning, function of prayer and how prayer is learned, are related to the complex understanding of human experience and belief.   These are questions that cannot be answered with exact measurement but rather rely on analysis of deeper qualitative data.   According to Meltzoff (1998) the basic questions of the study as well as the environment of related research determine the method of research.

Crotty (1998) proposed that there were four elements that interrelate when considering the choice of method in research.   To justify the data collection method, and its link to the research question, a process of underlying support structures must be explicated.

Figure 3:1 : The process followed in finding a research method
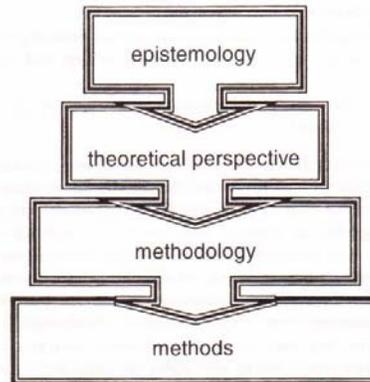
(Crotty, 1998, p. 4)

The top section of Crotty's figure (1998), shows the first area of concern as epistemology, that is, the conceptual framework or theory of knowledge which informs the study. The second area of concern is the theoretical or philosophical perspective that provides a broad academic base within a reputable research tradition. Although other authors disagree regarding the use of the term "methodology", for Crotty (1998) it refers to the third area of concern where an established form of method is selected. This finally leads to the choice of method, the techniques and procedures used to gather and analyse the data in this particular study.

An overview of the stages of the selection of method for this research is illustrated within Crotty's (1998) model:

Figure 3 2 : The choice of method for this study

Epistemology – Constructionism
▼
Theoretical perspective – Social Science-qualitative perspective
▼
Methodology – Grounded Theory
▼
Method – Individual videoed interviews with illustration and written exercise
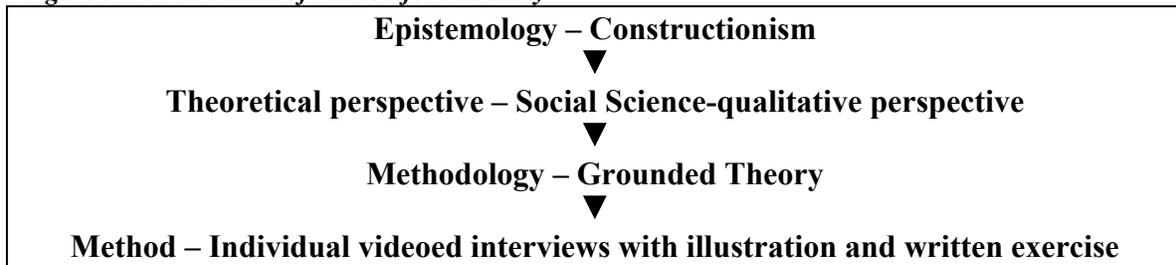
Epistemology - Conceptual Framework

Crotty (1998) recognised that a dialectic exists between the choice of method and the conceptual framework or epistemological approach behind that method. Crotty (1998) identified three current epistemological positions: objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism.

Objective epistemology regards truth as existing independently of any "operation of consciousness" (p. 8). This is sometimes called the logical positivist view, that could be expressed through the statement, "that tree in the forest is a tree, regardless of whether anyone is aware of its existence or not". Crotty (1998) suggested that much earlier research was governed by the objective epistemology, that truth was considered as objectively available and could be identified "with precision and certitude" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). Van Manen (1994) considered that although the objectivist approach can be viewed as an earlier form of research, it is still used extensively in research situations concerned with empirically verifiable facts. As this study is dealing with questions of meaning and interpretation of psychological experience, the objectivist epistemology is not appropriate (Sarantakos, 1998).

The subjective epistemology, regards meaning and truth as imposed on the object by the subject. Crotty (1998) recognised the subjective epistemology in structuralist and

postmodern forms of thinking. The object is not viewed as an active part of the

engagement with the subject in the generation of meaning; rather all truth is seen to be

dependent on the subject.

The epistemology of constructionism takes the middle ground, regarding truth or

meaning coming from the relationship between the subject and object. That is, the

relationship between the researcher and participant is central to the discovery of human

belief and ideas. Tarnas (1991) explained this epistemological perspective as

constructed through relationship: "reality is not a solid self-contained given . . . one is

always necessarily engaged in reality, thereby transforming it while being transformed"

(p. 396). The truth is neither discovered nor imposed but rather seen in the middle

ground.

> There is no meaning without a mind. Meaning is not discovered it is constructed.
>
> In this understanding of knowledge, it is clear that different people may construct
>
> meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. Isn't this
>
> precisely what we find when we move from one era to another or from one
>
> culture to another? In this view of things, subject and object emerge as partners in
>
> the generation of meaning. (Crotty, 1998, p. 9)

Constructionist epistemology was chosen as the most appropriate basis for this

research because the nature of the data to be collected was children's interpretation of

meaning. This epistemology is also an appropriate one given that Australia is a multi

cultural and multifaith society. There will be many "forms of truth" expressed in such a

society. It is anticipated that the participants from different faiths, coming from different

schools will present different viewpoints on prayer.   It is also anticipated that idiosyncratic belief and understanding could also be expressed through the interviews.

The constructionist orientation is also appropriate for this research because of the type of relationship between the researcher and the participants.   Van Manen (1994) suggested that when there is a pedagogic relationship, such as an adult researcher interacting with children, a constructionist epistemology is appropriate.   The constructionist conceptual framework for research was linked intrinsically to the activity of being a teacher or adult researcher in education.   The researcher was interested in questions about "what" and "how" humans know, and this related to the "life world where knowledge speaks through lived experiences . . . back to our world, to our lives, to who we are, and what makes us write, read, and talk together as educators" (p. 46).   The researcher and the participants, the teacher and the student or the adult and the child are considered as separate parts of the one relationship which together give meaning.   The constructionist approach is therefore appropriate in acknowledging the complexity of the pedagogical relationship.

The constructionist understanding is also appropriate in relation to the interview method in the study which requires a two-way sharing of understanding in relationship. Understanding will emerge from the large gathering of information, ideas and opinions from the participants as they respond to the interviewer.

Theoretical perspective - Social science orientation - Qualitative research
Van Manen (1994) considered that Natural Science studies things, the objects of nature, showing how they behave and for this purpose uses a quantitative form of measurement and comparison.   However, Human Science or Social Science, in dealing

with persons or beings with consciousness, demands a "higher order" of investigation, a qualitative method.   Van Manen cited the words of Nietzsche "Whoever is searching for the human being first must find the lantern" (p. 4).   To define a human being or the aspects of being human is a complex task of knowing and being.   The researcher is always part of the research problem.   Van Manen (1994) suggested that human research is phenomenological, in that it is concerned with questions of meaning rather than seeking solutions.

> When a phenomenologist asks for the essence of a phenomenon- a lived experience- then the phenomenological inquiry is not unlike an artistic endeavor, a creative attempt to somehow capture a certain phenomenon of life in a linguistic description which is both holist and analytical, evocative and precise, unique and universal, powerful and sensitive" (Van Manen, 1994, p. 39)

Van Manen (1994) stated that the image of quantitative method as "hard" and measurable should be set alongside qualitative method which can also be considered as "strong" or "hard", but in the moral sense of commitment of courage to investigate the complex task at hand.   This "hardness" of honest resolve in qualitative research shows itself paradoxically in attitudes and research practice which are "soft", "subtle", "soulful" and "sensitive" (p.18).   It is an "attempt to accomplish the impossible: to construct a full interpretive description of some aspect of the life world, and yet remain aware that lived life is always more complex than any explication of meaning can reveal" (p. 18).

Leedy (1993), citing Stainbeck and Stainbeck, outlined the distinctive aspects of the two orientations of "qualitative" and "quantitative" research (p. 142).

Figure 3.3 : A comparison of qualitative and quantitative research

	Qualitative	Quantitative
	Insider	Outsider
	Dynamic reality	Stable
	Holistic	Particularistic
	Discovery orientation	Verification orientation
	Subjective	Objective
	Naturalistic conditions	Controller conditions
	Valid (true or full picture)	Reliable (replicable)

(Leedy, 1993, p. 144)

This research involved the researcher as an insider, a known and familiar person, in a natural school setting.   It is acknowledged that the data collected was part of the inner world of the child, embedded in feelings and experience.   Therefore discovery of the data was complex, part of the interchange between researcher and participant.   The researcher's subjective involvement and sensitivity were central aspects of the data collection.

In summary:

The Constructionist epistemology was considered as the underlying basis for the selection of methodology (Crotty, 1998; Tarnas, 1991; van Manen, 1994).

The literature reviewed has shown that qualitative research is the orientation most suitable to the collection of experiences and opinions from children in the present study (Crotty, 1998; Leedy, 1993; van Manen, 1994).   Understanding aspects of belief and experience about prayer does not fit with the concept of exact quantitative measurement. Rather words, ideas and images were collected in a qualitative manner.   It follows from van Manen's view (1994) of phenomenology through pedagogic inquiry, with a

qualitative form of research that is not a "soft" option but is "rigorous . . . systematic . . . explicit . . . self-critical . . . (and) inter-subjective" (p. 11).

Van Manen (1994) and Leedy (1993) shared a common understanding of qualitative method as intrinsic to the Social Science perspective. However, Crotty (1998) differed, he considered the choice of qualitative or quantitative research was only a choice of method. For Crotty, both methods of quantitative and qualitative data collection can be used in a constructionist framework within the discipline of Social Science.

Kvale (1996) presented another aspect of inter-subjective awareness of the method of data collection, through the selection of the interview as a research tool. The use of interview proposed by Kvale, incorporated both the Constructivism epistemology and the Social Science perspective. Further discussion of Kvale's understanding of the interview will be presented in a later section of this chapter.

<div align="center">Methodology - Grounded Theory</div>

Sarantakos(1998) expressed a similar image to van Manen's view of Social Science as an artistic endeavour. He identified Grounded Theory as a form of qualitative research whose "Scientific interpretation of reality resembles that of an artist" (p. 201). It involves the researcher in dynamic and creative interaction with the participants. The term "grounded" is used to describe the way in which the theory arises from the ground of the data. Theory can be identified as based in or emerging out of the empirical data.

Grounded Theory was first developed jointly by Glaser and Strauss (1967), and since that time has received growing attention and acceptance as a methodology which can be used to generate theory in new areas of research (Sarantakos,1998, p. 206).

According to Glaser (1992; 1998) the key concept in Grounded Theory is the "Eureka process" (Glaser,1992, p. 82).   Through the determined and disciplined task of constant comparison across the data, there is eventually discovery.   According to Glaser (1992) "Eureka" - "I have found it" expresses the understanding that the core category with a pattern of related properties emerge from the data.   Grounded Theory involves intentional and persistent effort on the part of the researcher, while at the same time the theory is seen to "emerge" from the weight of the data.   The researcher, through constant cross checking and immersion in the data, generates "open" codes and written memos, and these grow conceptually in complexity, density, clarity and accuracy.   It is an inductive process leading to an integrated theory which emerges through the researcher's sensitive and constant comparison and verification of codes from the data.   As well as sensitivity, the researcher needs patience, for the naming of the category and properties is constantly adjusted or polished until the final phase where the force of the data leads to a point of "saturation" or certainty.

Practical details of the methodology can vary.   Glaser (1998) and Strauss (1990) have disagreed on the amount of coding which is advisable.   Strauss and Corbin (1990) developed many patterns of memos, diagrams, coding and categories to assist the emergence of the final category.   Glaser (1998) was concerned that the data should not be "forced" through using an analysis system.   He emphasised that the researcher should allow the new aspects of theory to "emerge", trusting in "the preconscious processing" (p. 145).   It is Glaser's (1998) emphasis which is followed in this research.

Grounded Theory has been selected as the preferred methodology for this research.   As has been demonstrated in the literature review of this study, the subject of

children's prayer has received little attention. There is need for initial broad generation of theory as a starting point for further investigation. Sarantakos (1998) stated that Grounded Theory is mostly used when theory needs to be generated in a new field of inquiry. Grounded Theory is described as "generational methodology" by Glaser (1992, p. 30), that is, the focus is on generating theory rather than testing theory.

Bryman and Burgess (1994) assert that pure Grounded Theory is rare, as most researchers use the theory in a general way, adapting some aspects to fit the circumstances of the particular study. With this in mind, some attention will be given to the place of the literature review in this study which uses Grounded Theory.

Association with the Literature Review

In the pure method of Grounded Theory, background reading is actively discouraged. Glaser (1992 p.31) drew attention to the possibility that literature could be "rich derailments" in the research process, meaning that the literature could impede the open, theoretical sensitivity of the researcher when the data were being analysed. The researcher must guard against areas of thinking which might contaminate or inhibit the open approach to the generation of categories which emerge from the data. Glaser acknowledged the importance of reading in unrelated fields, as wide reading gave the researcher a deep pool of ideas and sensitivity to various forms of theory which may emerge from the data (Glaser, 1992 p. 33). However, formulation and use of a specific literature review, as seen in the previous chapter, do not fit well with Glaser's intention for purity of approach to the data (Glaser, 1992, p.31).

In this study, reading in related fields had already taken place before the methodology was decided upon. Ideas about prayer, God, the teaching of different faith

traditions and coping literature have all formed the intellectual framework which the researcher brought to the study. However, even with this background of reading, it is considered that the strong recommendation of Glaser (1992) for the researcher to "learn not to know" can still be adopted as a guiding principle. The listening attitude of the researcher, taking time to identify the words of the participants, comparing and constant checking, all form part of the desired "analytical distance" (Glaser, 1992, p. 12). That is, the researcher is consciously aware of personal assumptions and beliefs and seeks to focus as honestly as possible on the data. The "analytical distance" recommended by Glaser (1992, p. 12) is similar to the idea expressed as "bracketing" by Moore and Habel (1982, p. 63). The researcher aimed at holding personal beliefs in a "bracket", to pay more attention to new ideas and beliefs. In this disciplined manner, new data are considered and new emerging theory is identified.

Specific Interview Skills needed for the Study

As well as analytic method and skills, as discussed in the theoretical section above, the success of this research depended on the practical interview skills of the researcher. The purpose of the study was to hear the ideas of the child, and this first meant that the child felt free to communicate. A relaxed atmosphere of trust between researcher and participant was needed. As in the model of Invitational Theory (Purkey and Stanley, 1991; Smith, 2003) there should be no attitude of compulsion or specific expectations in the interview situation. Rather the qualities of trust, respect, optimism and intentionality were the foundations for the research relationship. The relationship of trust was developed by the researcher through an open attitude of respect for the ideas of the participant. Optimism was similarly expressed by the researcher as the participants

were viewed as "possessing untapped potential" (Smith, 2003, p. 4). Finally the interview relationship was intentionally constructed by the researcher who positively invited the participants to share their thoughts and experiences.

The image of the interview as "play" was noted from the observation research conducted by Erikson (1950). His approach enabled a link to be made with the life of the child, giving the child confidence and freedom of expression. Erikson's approach has been a guiding principle for this study. Similarly, the interview style of Winnecott (1958) presented a model of child-centred attention in the interview process. These earlier models of human science research were used in a more contemporary context in the interview style of Coles (1990). He interviewed children in a wide range of cultural situations and in an empathetic manner gained their trust and confidence. The influence of these research models is acknowledged by this researcher in the preparation for this study.

The work of Kvale (1996) has also been influential in preparation for this research. Kvale contrasted two metaphors: the researcher can be a "miner" digging for gold or a "traveller" "wandering together with" the subject (p. 4). These two metaphors speak to different epistemological positions. The positivist philosophy of objectivism used the image of the "miner" looking for the one certain treasure, the gold. However, the constructionist understanding of life is related to the image of "traveller", someone walking beside and sharing. The researcher is involved in a conversation with the participant. It is not an equal partnership, for the researcher directs and defines the situation to some degree, but the interchange of ideas is part of the relationship.

Kvale (1996) stated that the researcher should develop a "deliberate naiveté" (p. 31) and an "ever-hovering attention" (p. 149). These intentions are reflected in the interview protocol for this study. The interview was structured and focused on a particular theme, but during the interview there was an acceptance of contradiction, a gentle challenge to clarify and extend meaning, with sensitivity to the feelings of the participant. The aim was to make the experience positive, giving the participant a reflective space for expression of ideas and new insight. The images of Kvale (1996) have a positive resonance with the researcher, whose background of experience has been as a primary school teacher and parent. The images of "traveller", "deliberate naiveté" and "ever-hovering attention" have been guiding ideas in preparation for the interviews.

The work of Kvale (1996) also advocated caution in the use of transcripts in analysis, for "interviews are living conversations". In order to maintain the "living" aspect of the interview, the researcher used video collection of data, and these were constantly reviewed during the period of analysis, each interview was recorded using video equipment, audio recording was also made and used to maintain the "living" quality of the interview. In this way the analysis of the data was closely linked to the actual interview situation.

Additional assistance in interview technique was gained through the ideas of Bandler and Grinder (1979). They asserted that communication can be enhanced when one party uses the same "representational style" as the other (p. 17). In the case of this study, the researcher adopted some of the same metaphors of hearing, seeing or feeling as the participant. Bandler and Grindler (1979) advocated this as a technique of reflective listening which builds a bond of trust between the researcher and participant, enabling

greater expression of honesty.   Once again, as with the other literature referred to in this section, Bandler and Grinder (1979) stated that "attending to the other" is the intention of the interview, it is "up time" (p. 55) a quality of attention which requires the researcher to suspend her own inner world and focus on the other.

The ideas of Bandler and Grindler (1979) were particularly useful in the interviews with the Jewish and Muslim children.   As there was an awareness of separation in religious affiliation and language, between the researcher and participants in these groups, additional care was taken to establish a position of trust and respect.   As well as adopting similar metaphors, words and phrases introduced by the participants were used by the researcher to form a "bridge", showing respect and attention from the researcher.   Use was also made of physical "mirroring", where the researcher adopted a similar body position to that of the participant.   As well as the practical help in the interview situation, awareness of the subtlety of communication with body language (Bandler and Grindler,1979) was of value in the analysis of data.   This will be discussed further in the chapters which explicate and discuss the findings of the research.

The Interview Protocol

Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance for the research was gained from the Australian Catholic University (Appendix A).   Written permission was granted from the Principals and Year Five class teachers of the participating schools.   The students invited to take part in the interview were given an information letter, written in language appropriate to their age group.   Participants were also asked to complete a form declaring their consent to the interview and the use of the data.   Parents of the participants were given a more detailed

information letter and form on which to acknowledge their consent.   The wording of the

letters emphasised that consent was voluntary.   Principals of the schools involved were

given a detailed interview protocol, and participants, parents/guardians and principals

were encouraged to contact the researcher if there was need to further clarify or question

the research proposal.

The letters of information and consent were produced under the guidelines of the

Human Research Ethics Committee of the Australian Catholic University.   The steps

taken were consistent with the recognised ethical codes outlined by Meltzoff (1998).   A

copy of the information letters and letters of consent are included in Appendix A.

Design and Trial

As demonstrated earlier, the interview protocol was initially designed using ideas

selected from the literature.   The Figure below shows the connections between the

interview protocol and the literature:

Figure 3.4 : Use of literature in the interview protocol design

Open interview manner	Kvale (1996)
	Berryman (1991)
	K. Smith (2003)
	Erikson (1950)
	Coles (1990)
Researcher awareness needed for cross cultural interviews.	Coles (1990)
	Heller (1986)
	Hay (1998)
Use of unfinished sentences	Elkind, Spilka and Long (1968)
Use of illustrations	Coles (1990).
Emphasis on function of prayer	Pargament (1997)
	Resnic (1993).
Attention to the possible non-valuing of prayer	Bouma (2002)

Crawford and Rossiter (1996)

Initial trials were conducted using five individual children known to the researcher. Of these, four children were in Year Five and one in Year Four. The triangulation of data collection was tested and shown to be of benefit in allowing the participants the opportunity to express their ideas in different forms. Drawing a picture was considered to give a comfortable introduction to the discussion. The writing exercise was observed to add a sense of comfortable familiarity as a type of school activity which facilitated discussion in the interview. The triangulation gave the researcher an opportunity to check the consistency of the responses offered at different points in the interview. This increased the validity and the reliability of the data collection and analysis. Both video and audio recording equipment were used to guarantee a comprehensive collection of data. Time was spent perfecting the technical use of the video and audio recording equipment before data were collected.

One aspect of the interview protocol was added at the conclusion of the interviews at the first school. In the second school, the researcher drew a picture to aid discussion about the proportion of people who pray in the world. This was found to be helpful, so the picture was then taken back to the first school and the individual students invited to add further ideas using this picture. These additional data were not recorded on video but noted as memos. The question relating to an estimate of the world-wide use of prayer was included to gain another perspective to verify the students' concept of the importance of prayer. Verifying through cross-checking through different parts of the interview was a feature used in analysis because of concern that participants could give "proper" answers to please either the school or the researcher. These "proper" answers were noted and considered. The aim through the analysis was to identify the responses

which were honest reflections of the perceptions of prayer, having significance for the participants.

<center>*School Selection - Sampling Strategy*</center>

Subjects were selected from a range of schooling systems that reflect the multicultural, multifaith nature of Australian society. The schools were all situated in the southern metropolitan region of Melbourne, and the selection of schools represented both the different faith systems reflected in the census figures and the most common groups found in the southern region of Melbourne.

As Christianity is the professed religion of most Australians, three schools associated with the Christian tradition were chosen. Both the Catholic school and the Christian (parent controlled) schools allocated considerable time and resources to teaching religion (Appendix C) and these schools also provided students with many experiences of prayer. The Catholic Church (Roman Catholic Church) is the largest Christian denomination in Australia (Bouma, 2002, p. 3). The Christian school is part of a relatively new school system in Melbourne and can be associated with the rise in Pentecostalism in the last two decades (Bouma, 2002, p. 3). The choice of an Independent school added to the range of church-related schools chosen for this study. The independent school was formally associated with a Protestant Church but had very little time allocated to religious activities. Although the Jewish faith is not strongly represented in the census figures, an Orthodox Jewish school was selected for the study because of the large and well established concentration of Jewish people in the southern Melbourne region. The inclusion of participants from the Muslim school acknowledged the most recent wave of immigration to Australia with numbers growing from 0.2% of

the population in 1971 to 1.5% of the population in 2001 (Bouma, 2002, p. 3).   Muslims

are increasingly represented in the population of Melbourne.   Finally, a government

school was chosen to have one school from the public education sector.   Appendix C

outlines some of the differences observed between these different schools especially in

relation to their teaching of religion and prayer.

Given the size of this study, it was not possible to include subjects from schools

specifically established to promote cultures such as Aboriginal, Hindu or Buddhist

cultures.   An extension of the study to such schools would be an opportunity for further

research.   The choice of southern metropolitan Melbourne is a limitation in relation to

geographic location.   Further research of this type could be extended to rural areas of

Australia and other metropolitan centres.

Subject Selection Strategy

Following the ideas of Wiersma (1995), care was taken to control as many

variables as possible in subject selection.   Subjects for interview were selected from the

same year level (Primary school Year Five) with an equal distribution between male and

female participants.   Selection of participants was made through an opportunistic

process.   To avoid using participants not especially chosen by the school as excelling in

religious studies, numbers from 1-30 were randomly selected.   These selected numbers

were placed alongside the roll order for the school grade, to select five girls and five

boys.   Information and consent forms were sent home with these selected students.   If

those selected declined participation, then the process was repeated with new information

and consent forms sent home to the next students on the random order.

Unfortunately these intentions to control some of the variables were not completely realized. In the Catholic school, there were only three boys available in Year Five and so two Year Six boys were added as interview participants. In the Muslim school, there was confusion in communication between the deputy head master and the class teacher. The ten subjects from this school were all drawn from Year Six. This was not considered to be problematic from the school's point of view, as the class teacher explained that nine of the ten participants were second phase English as a Second Language learners and one participant was a first phase English as a Second Language student. It was suggested that the increased age of the students would compensate for the restricted ability to express themselves in English. Students at this school were not selected using the roll order process as used in the other schools, but rather selected by the class teacher. The students selected by the class teacher were considered to have the required level of English needed for the interview.

Cultural Considerations

Van Manen (1994) emphasised the need for the researcher to explicate assumptions and pre-understandings, Moore and Habel (1982) used the term "bracketing" to describe the intentional process of awareness and containment of assumptions by the researcher. This was part of the interview preparation as the researcher adopted a conscious decision to "bracket" her own religious convictions to consider the unfamiliar cultures of some of the participants. Attention and time were given in each school, to become familiar with the school culture so that the interviews were conducted in an open, respectful manner.

The cultures of the Catholic, Christian, independent and government schools as familiar to the researcher were considered to pose little problem.   Greater attention to cultural differences was required in the Jewish and Muslim schools.   The first issue was associated with language, as prayer in the Muslim school was conducted in Arabic and prayers in the Jewish school were conducted in Hebrew, languages with which the researcher was not familiar.   Prior reading about the traditions was undertaken, and the interview participants were encouraged to help in translating the meaning of specific words.   These words were collected in a glossary which can be seen to precede the interview notes (Appendix C).   Secondly, the interviewer sought advice on appropriate clothing.   The researcher intended to show respect and a sense of connection to the participants through following the dress code of the schools.   Finally care was taken in relation to special places where the interviews could take place.   In one school there was concern expressed that subjects should remain in the presence of a school staff member during the interview time.   This at first, seemed to pose a restriction on the freedom of conversation, however, because the staff member worked in an adjoining office during the interviews, there seemed no impediment to the freedom of the participants.

Before the interviews were conducted in each of the schools, the researcher spent at least two sessions of time in the classroom observing the students, and the normal classroom activities.   There was opportunity to speak with individual students, admire art work and talk about projects and other activities of interest.   Special worship activities were also observed.   The researcher spent time in the play-ground observing and being seen.   All of these activities gave the researcher a sense of the culture of the school, the

norms of behaviour and an initial knowledge of individual students. It also gave the students time to accept the researcher as a real person, not just an outsider to the school.

The Interview

(Appendix B gives a full account of the protocol used in each interview.)

The interviews were approached in a considered and cautious manner, with awareness of the complexity of the human relationship. To illustrate the complex nature of the interview Kvale (1996) used the ambiguous drawing by the Danish psychologist Rubin (Kvale, 1996, p.15). This black and white image can be interpreted in two different ways. It can be seen as two black heads in profile looking at each other on a white ground, or as a white vase on a black ground. It is a relevant image for the interview situation in that there are two heads facing each other in dialogue, but in some mysterious way these two heads also make a new shape between them. The central vase-like shape can be seen to be created in the space between the two people in dialogue. It can represent the container of knowledge created or generated from the interview. Knowledge can be viewed as constructed in the interchange, from the dynamic of the relationship. The image from Kvale (1996, p.15) is reproduced in the forward to this thesis as a metaphor of the research situation in this thesis.

Before the interview the researcher made sure that the environment was suitable. An interview room was prepared and set up with video and audio recorders, paper and pens. The chair for the participant was placed opposite the researcher with the video recorder off to one side, giving a triangular area of interaction. The interview room was usually attached to the library, so that some visual contact was maintained with school staff members for ethical reasons. Temperature and lighting were checked for comfort.

At the time of the interview, participants were withdrawn individually from class. Initial discussion verified the purpose of the interview reinforcing the information sent home. The confidentiality of the situation was discussed, and a code number was selected for the subject to identify his/her work during the interview. It was emphasised that this was not a test, nor a teaching time, rather the researcher was enlisting the help of the participant to make a large collection of ideas about prayer. It was stated that all of the ideas of participants were valued, with nothing thought to be either right or wrong. Some informal conversation about school and family added to the introduction.

The interview opened with a question regarding what prayer looked like. The participant was invited to draw a picture of someone praying. Using the drawn image, discussion emerged leading to the major questions of the interview: What do you think is being said or thought? Who prays? When do people pray? How do they pray? Why do they pray? and, Where? There was awareness that for some participants prayer might be thought to be silly, old fashioned or irrelevant. These ideas would also be accepted and discussed with respect. The questioning was open in style with latitude for the researcher to question further any interesting ideas offered by the participant.

At a certain point through the interview, a sketch was drawn by the researcher to aid discussion regarding the participant's idea about the percentage of people who prayed regularly, daily or once a week, (Appendix B). The same sketch was used to discuss the percentage of people who never prayed. The sketch was first used after ten participants had completed their interviews, and subsequently the sketch was taken back to these first subjects and time was spent with each to gain the additional information generated by the sketch.

Additional questions formed part of the interview. There was consideration given to the common expression on television of "Oh my God!" enquiring whether it might be a form of prayer. Other enquiring questions related to what kind of a "thing" prayer was, where prayers come from and where they go. Participants were invited to respond to the situation of "unanswered prayer", and this gave an opportunity to discuss lack of belief or practice in prayer. There was also a question inviting participants to consider if there had ever been a time when prayer had been powerful or important for them personally.

The interview concluded with the participant completing the set of six unfinished sentences. After only two interviews it was recognised that the writing of the sentences took too much time. Therefore, in the following interviews the researcher offered to write the sentences while the participant dictated the answers. This was preferable as the participant could then concentrate on the thoughts and not be concerned with writing legibility and spelling. Finally the interview was concluded, the participant thanked and a small gift of appreciation was given to the participant.

Analysis of Results

As outlined earlier in this chapter, the use of Grounded Theory attempts to discover "what is there" (Glaser, 1998). All are data; the illustrations, the writing, the talking, the body language, the clothing and the school environment. The researcher endeavoured to hold all of the aspects in an open manner to enable the common categories and properties to emerge.

The Process

The First Analysis

The first form of analysis was concerned with individual subjects:

- o The video recording of each individual interview was viewed repeatedly.

- o Memos regarding meaning and function were extracted and the data were summarised.

- o Significant quotations from each participant were written as memos.

Quotations were identified from the interview video as times when the subject engaged actively with enthusiasm. The intention was to determine aspects of the participant's response which were not just the "proper line" of the school, but rather an inner reality for the student. Many aspects of the video image were used to identify the significant quotations, such as the clarity of expression, body movement, voice tone and eye contact. The video was also played fast-forward to more readily identify times of energetic engagement. This involved many runs and re-runs of sections of the tape. The process of analysing the data to find significant quotations is discussed more fully in chapter four of this thesis.

As had been anticipated, there were times of technical difficulty. Technical problems with the camera meant that some footage was blurred, and in these cases the additional audio tapes were used to supplement the data.

The next part of this first stage of analysis involved the following steps:

- o The memos from the individual participant's interview video were compared with his or her illustration of prayer and record of the completed sentences.

- o The three data sources were combined

- A summary analysis for the individual participant was compiled showing a category and properties for the meaning and function of prayer.

The Second Analysis

Data from individual participants were collected into groups according to school:

- The ten participants' illustrations were compared and memos recorded of common aspects (Appendix D).

- The responses of the ten participants to the questions relating to the estimation of people in the world who pray were placed together in a table (Appendix E).

There was some variation in the amount of response to this question of world-wide use of prayer, as some subjects were more interested and some less interested in thinking on this global level.

Finally:

- Recorded important moments of prayer were tabulated for each school (see Appendix F)

- The sets of findings from participants in each school were placed together to find categories and properties regarding the meaning and function of prayer.

To some degree this was a combination of qualitative and quantitative aspects of analysis. The weight of numbers of responses of similar content was important. All similar categories were compared and collected to form large common categories and properties which could be seen to emerge from the great bulk of data. In this way the final category was "polished" through the constant comparison (Glaser, 1998, p. 145)

The Third Analysis

The third stage of analysis involved comparing all of the previous data, both the raw data and the analysed findings, to find theory related to the data from all participants.

- o Using all of the data, a final category and set of properties were found for the meaning of prayer

- o Using all of the data, a final category and set of properties were found for the function of prayer

- o The data relating to how prayer was learned were combined to find areas of agreement and difference

Verification and Use of Specialists

The questions in the interview protocol were designed to have inbuilt checks to help to verify the opinions of the participants in their appreciation of prayer.   It was anticipated that in the secular culture, prayer for many would be irrelevant or considered to be foolish, and it was important that these honest responses were collected.   The researcher employed many professional colleagues to help verify the data collection and analysis process.   Research colleagues were made aware of the confidentiality of the research material, and were asked to check for interviewer affect as well as the reliability of the analysis.   Over 30 specialists and colleagues were used in the verification process. These are listed below:

AA [2]a professional psychologist, with extensive experience as a school counsellor was invited to view three different interviews.   She was asked to identify the times when children were expressing ideas that were important for them.   These were the ideas of high energy which suggested creative thinking or strong personal affirmation.

Her notes on these three participants were then compared with the notes of the interviewer, and general agreement was seen in the identification of significant quotations from the participants.

BB a child psychologist, was invited to give comments on the illustrations completed by the subjects. His analysis of some of the common features and the way in which these had been portrayed added to the researcher's understanding of the illustrations.

Rater-Reliability Checks

At an early stage in the analysis process CC, researcher and senior lecturer at Australian Catholic University, watched three different interview videos with the researcher. The summary and analysis of the content of the videos were then discussed and compared with the notes of the researcher. General agreement was found between the analysis of the researcher and CC

After the completion of the researcher's initial analysis, assistance was sought from other postgraduate students to verify the findings of "meaning" and "function" of prayer. A group of 15 students at a postgraduate seminar at Australian Catholic University watched one interview, and they were also shown the illustration and sentence completed exercise from this participant. Students took notes during the video, and a discussion followed which confirmed the analysis of the researcher.

A DVD was burnt showing five different interviews. Three interviews showed participants who were committed to their three different religious faith traditions, one further interview showed a participant with her own idiosyncratic faith in the use of prayer, and one interview was of a participant who expressed limited knowledge and

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[2] Names have been omitted for ethical reasons.

value of prayer. It was intended that these selected interviews would give a broad

picture of the total subjects in the study. Accompanying the DVD was a copy of the

participants' illustration of prayer and the participants' completed sentence exercises.

This package was given to DD of the Australian Catholic University, and a duplicate

package was used in a meeting with two postgraduate colleagues EE and FF. The

analyses suggested by these colleagues compared favourably with the work of the

researcher.

A selection of video clips was compiled and shown in a presentation to a

multifaith audience at the International Conference on Children's Spirituality Victoria BC

in August 2003. Discussion showed a positive endorsement of the interview technique

and analysis process.

Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the choice of method used in this study. The

triangulated method of personal interview, illustration and written sentence completion

exercise has been shown to be appropriate in the context of the methodology of Grounded

Theory . Grounded Theory as a qualitative approach to social science has been placed

within the constructionist framework of epistemology. Each aspect of the choice of

method is shown to relate to the other, and all relate to the research questions. Greater

detail regarding aspects of method can be obtained from Appendices A B C D and E

which are placed at the end of this thesis.

In the following three chapters, the analysis of the data collected through the

method outlined above will be discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter

two. In chapter four the "meaning" of prayer shown as a category and properties will be

presented and discussed.   In chapter five the "function" of prayer will be presented and discussed.   Further findings related to ways in which prayer is learned are examined and discussed in chapter six.   Chapter seven then summarises the findings, implications and recommendations arising from the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE MEANING OF PRAYER - FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

The data were collected using the method outlined in chapter three, and the researcher used the method of constant comparison from Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992) to identify the two aspects or aims of this study, the "meaning" and the "function" of prayer. Although the data indicated some common characteristics between the findings related to the two research aims, the analyses of the "meaning" and the "function" of prayer are treated separately. This chapter presents the findings and discussion relating to the meaning of prayer, while chapter five presents the findings and discussion in relation to the function of prayer. A subsequent chapter discusses the findings that occurred in relation to how children learn to pray.

As defined in chapter one the "meaning" of prayer is the identification of what prayer is, and the identification of the significance or importance of prayer. To find the meaning participants attached to prayer required analysis of the different ways in which participants expressed their understanding of the nature of prayer.

Part One of this chapter outlines the findings identified in the four different levels of data analysis in relation to the meaning of prayer for the participants. There were three forms of data collection used in this study for the meaning of prayer. The preliminary organisation and summary of these three data sources form the first level of data analysis, the second level of analysis displays the representation of meaning for each participant, the third level of analysis combines the findings from individuals into a representation according to school groups, and this leads to the final combination of all data into a theoretical finding. Table 4.1 shows the four levels of data analysis with the associated forms of presentation of outcomes.

The different levels of data analysis demonstrate how the final theory emerged through constant comparison into "higher levels of . . . overriding and integrating conceptualizations" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 36). The terms "category" and "properties" are used specifically in relation to Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967). "Category" refers to a dominant organizing concept which is identified from the data through the process of analysis. "Properties" refer to conceptual elements or

aspects of a category.   The individual analyses of level two are combined into refined figures to show "categories" and "properties" for each school group.   The final level of analysis displays a composite theory emerging from all of the data, of the category and properties of the meaning of prayer for the total participant group.

Table 4.1 :
Sequence of analysis using Grounded Theory – the meaning of prayer

	Levels	Outcomes
1	Summarisation and preliminary analysis of raw data:	
	Illustrations……………………………………..	Table 4.2
	Videoed interviews ………………………….	memos and working notes
	Sentence completion ………………………..	Appendix G
	"Prayer is…"	
2	Synthesis of data for each participant	Category and Properties for each individual participant- Tables 4.3-4.9
3	Synthesis of findings for each school	Category and Properties for participants from each school– Figures 4.1-4.6
4	Synthesis of findings – the meaning of prayer	Category and Properties across the whole study - Figure 4.7

Part Two of this chapter discusses the findings in relation to the literature reviewed.

Part One - Findings through the Data Analysis

Triangulation

Analysis of the Illustrations

The activity of illustrating prayer formed the introduction to the interview.   The interviewer asked "Do you know what it looks like when someone prays? Could you draw it for me?" One subject could not respond to this invitation to draw because of injury, but he willingly described what was needed in the illustration and the interviewer completed the drawing.   Four participants were hesitant to start the task, expressing

concern because of their lack of artistic ability.   However, some encouragement was given, and the illustrations were completed.

Within each school group there were different degrees of detail displayed by individual subjects in their illustrations (see Table 4.2).   The researcher observed that some participants took care to illustrate particular aspects of prayer in their faith tradition. Some illustrations were simple and more hurriedly completed in cartoon form.

As can be observed from the total collection of illustrations in Appendix D, there are a variety of postures associated with prayer.   Although in a small number of illustrations the features are not easily identified, the following table is a summary of different features of the illustrations.   The illustrations of the participants are grouped according to the school attended.   The selection of schools has been outlined in the method discussion in chapter three.   There were ten participants from each school, and these participants sometimes drew one illustration and sometimes drew multiple figures of people praying.   The percentage after the raw number in Table 4.2 indicates the percentage of times the particular aspect was observed in relation to the total number of illustrations by that school group.   A second percentage in brackets shows the percentage of participants in that school group who showed the particular feature of prayer in their illustration.

Table 4.2 :
Features of participants' illustrations by school group

Features	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
Number of figures drawn	12	27	17	15	11	16
Kneeling	6 50% (60%)	5 18% (50%)	6 35% (60%)	6 40% (60%)	1 9% (10%)	1 6% (10%)
Standing	3 25% (30%)	12 44% (70%)	6 35% (30%)	3 20% (30%)	9 81% (80%)	13 81% (100%)
Sitting	0	6 22% (40%)	2 11% (10%)	3 20% (30%)	1 9% (10%)	0
Hands palms together	10 80% (90%)	4 14% (40%)	5 29% (50%)	8 53% (80%)	0	0
Hands clasped in front	1 8% (10%)	0	2 11% (20%)	2 13% (20%)	0	8 50% (90%)
Facial features	12 100% (100%)	27 100% (100%)	9 52% (80%)	8 53% (70%)	9 81% (90%)	12 75% (90%)
Smiling	9 75% (80%)	17 62% (80%)	5 29% (40%)	5 33% (30%)	6 54% (60%)	1 6% (10%)
Eyes closed	4 33% (30%)	8 29% (40%)	4 23% (40%)	1 6% (10%)	1 9% (10%)	0
Eyes open	7 58% (80%)	15 55% (80%)	5 29% (50%)	7 46% (60%)	8 72% (80%)	7 43% (80%)
Eyes looking down	0	0	0	0	0	5 31% (50%)
With prayer book	0	0	0	0	11 100% (100%)	0
Indication of awareness of other traditions	0	0	5 29% (40%)	1 6% (10%)	1 9% (10%)	0

At present it should be noted that there was variation shown in the illustrations in relation to posture, expression and use of a prayer book.   A discussion of these findings will be found in the Part Two of this chapter.

The Unfinished Sentence Exercise

As discussed in chapter three of this thesis, the unfinished sentence exercise was included to aid verification, giving an alternative response to the question of meaning and function of prayer.   This exercise was the concluding part of the interview and to some extent it acted as a summary to the many thoughts expressed in the discussion. Originally it was intended that each participant would write his or her response, but after only two interviews it was decided that it would be better for the interviewer to write while the participant dictated the answers.   This reduced both the length of time for each interview and the sense of interviewee stress associated with neat writing and correct spelling.

As can be seen from the interview protocol (Appendix B) a variety of sentences provided options for thinking and discussion.   Sentence one; "prayer is…" has a direct application to the findings of this chapter.   Sentence two; "People pray because…", sentence four; "I would pray…" and sentence six; "I feel most prayerful when…" have a direct bearing on the function aspect of the research topic to be discussed in chapter five.   The other sentence fragments were included to allow scope for subjects who wished to express negative attitudes to prayer.   It was considered by the researcher that some participants would favour the negative options in the sentence exercise as part of their association with the secular culture (Bouma, 2002).

The first unfinished sentence in the interview protocol was used to determine the participant's understanding of the meaning of prayer for this chapter.   Using the first phrase, "Prayer is…" participants were invited to pretend that they were explaining the word, perhaps to someone who didn't know the word or concept.   "What is prayer?", "How could we describe it?" were supplementary questions.

Responses from this exercise can be found in Appendix G.

The Interviews

When reviewing the video-taped interviews it was observed that different aspects of the interview elicited greater energy and involvement from the participants. Identifying these moments necessitated human sensitivity and awareness on the part of the researcher. This was considered central to the research task as outlined by Kvale (1996) and van Manen (1994). Collegial assistance was used to verify this aspect of analysis.

The following behavioural indicators of personal involvement were identified during the interviews:

- quiet hesitation
- changes in body position
- movements of hands, particularly to the face
- greater eye contact
- increased eye movement
- change in voice tone
- change in the speed of speech – either slow and ponderous or fast and breathless
- struggling for words – trying one and then another

Since part of the search for children's understanding of prayer was to find the deeper personal meaning for participants, attention was given to these behavioural indicators. Each interview was analysed individually. The observation memos made when the videos were analysed noted the behavioural indicators listed above as moments of energy and involvement. For some participants the traditional ideas about prayer elicited moments of involvement and energy. More frequently it was observed that certain questions were identified as eliciting this heightened level of involvement from the participant. These questions were: "Is the expression 'O my God!' a form of prayer?" "Where do prayers come from?" "Where do prayers go?" "Can you estimate the percentage of people who pray in the world?" "How do people learn to pray?" These questions will be addressed in the discussion in the second part of this chapter.

The Sequence of Generating Theory

As previously outlined in chapter three there were four levels in the analysis of data. The process of analysis is outlined as a sequence in Table 4.1. At each level of analysis the categories and properties were refined through "cross" comparison on that level and 'back' comparison to the data on the previous levels. For example, the final

analysis of findings Table 4.7 entailed a synthesis of findings from each individual school as well as a review of the memos from individual participants to confirm the final definition of category and properties.

The following section of this thesis, displays the three levels of analysis: Levels two, three, and four from Table 4.1.

It should be noted that in the Tables 4.3- 4.9 there is much repetition. As stated in chapter three, the method of analysis used in this study first evaluated the data from each participant individually and where appropriate recorded the words and phrases of the participants from the interview (these words and phrases appear in parenthesis in the tables). Through repeated viewing of the video interview, comparison with the other two data sources, writing and sorting memos, a category was defined for the individual participant. Although these categories appear very similar, the small differences represent the emphasis displayed in the data. For example, the analysis of the meaning of prayer for participant G1 at the Catholic school is defined as "Thoughts from your heart going up to God the God of the tradition who helps". The words "from your heart" were the words used by the participant which were supported by numerous references to "feelings", "in my mind" and "from the soul" during the interview. This participant experienced this personal aspect of prayer from the heart often within the context of communal worship in Church. Aspects of the tradition mentioned by this participant were: making the sign of the cross, saying "Hail Mary…", "Our Father…", kneeling and closing eyes. She also conducted her own private funeral service for her dog that had died, opening the "service" with the words" "We are gathered here today…". In this way it could be observed that the dominant image of God for this participant was the God in heaven of the Catholic tradition, with the persons of Jesus and Mary as part of the helpful operation of God. The properties associated with the category for participant CS G1 reflect associated themes emerging as significant in the data. "Prayer goes through God to help others" summarises the way God is shown to help and the wide extent of help expressed by this participant. "Ritual prayers…expressing respect for God" indicates the importance of the community and the image of God in that faith tradition in the eyes of the participant.

Through this example it can be demonstrated that the researcher endeavored to treat the data from each participant as unique, with a conscious intention to "bracket" personal assumptions while maintaining sensitive listening to the participant's ideas.

The Catholic School - Analysis of Meaning levels two and three
Individual conceptions of category and properties relating to the meaning of prayer were determined by the researcher from the three data sources.   These individual concepts of the meaning of prayer are presented in the table below, followed by some remarks regarding the similarities and differences which led to the third stage of analysis where the analyses of individual participants were combined into one conception of category and properties which relate to the whole school group.

Table 4.3 :
Catholic School - Participants' responses

Participants' codes	Category- Prayer is…	Properties
G1	Thoughts "from your heart" going up to the God of the tradition who helps	Prayer goes through God to help others Ritual prayers - In Church – expressing respect for God
G2	"Talking" to God and Jesus who you can "trust"	A form of honesty An expression of feelings
G3	Personal and communal talking to God from feelings and through the tradition	A link to the faith community- Ritual prayers Bible prayers A link to the family
G4	A communal activity of connection to God who "watched over"	Part of tradition – Rite of "Reconciliation" Expressing respect Expressing feelings
G5	Personal and communal "talking" to a holy God who hears and wants to help	Respect is expressed through the ritual of the tradition A way of knowing God A way of connecting with others
B1	Personal and communal communication with God who helps	"From the heart" – thoughts, singing, hoping, whispering Ritual prayers
B2	Sharing "all things" in life with a loving God who "guides"	Being part of the faith community A form of "concentration" An expression of personal faith
B3	A special personal and communal activity which brings you close to God	Personal "spiritual" thinking or talking Connection to the faith community past and present An expression of faith
B4	Private listening and talking to a holy and caring God of the tradition	An expression of "love" to God Confession of sins
B5	A "thought message" sent to the God of the community who hears and helps	A link with other humans and the environment

The ten representations of the meaning of prayer from individual participants (Table 4.3) were compared to determine a dominant organizing idea, a category which would be

appropriate to all of the individual statements.   Similarly the properties were distilled to form a cohesive understanding that could be considered relevant to this group of participants.   The combined representation for the participants from the Catholic school is shown in Figure 4.1.   The meaning of prayer for all of these participants was displayed through the data in two interrelated ways.   Prayer was recognised both as a personal activity, usually in the mind or 'heart' and secondly as a communal activity in the Christian tradition using known forms of Catholic ritual.   The prayers of "Hail Mary…", "Our Father…" and the Rite of Reconciliation were familiar to all of the participants. The following quotations display some of the involvement of the participants from this school with the question of meaning: "Just makes you feel good . . . just look at it . . . He is watching over us" (G2).   "My reconciliation was special . . . told the Priest . . . told stuff that might have been bad . . . make it better" (G4).   "It's like talking to one of your friends" (G5).   "Prayer is a natural thing . . . like a child learning to walk . . . they just hope and do it" (B1).   "Prayers help you spiritually . . . not on the outside but on the inside . . . like if someone teases you that's on the inside" (B3).   "You can just feel something . . . if you are angry at someone and then you can be nice to them" (B4). "Prayer probably comes off you like a thought ray . . . a sixth sense . . . like sharks have electro-sensitivity" (B5).

Using the data presented above, through the analysis method of Grounded Theory, a combined representation of the responses of the participants from the Catholic school is expressed in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 : Catholic School - Combined representation

```
The meaning of prayer-
CATEGORY -Special forms of personal and communal communication with God who
helps
PROPERTIES--- A personal activity
                --Honest expression of feelings
                --Expressing respect and faith in God
                --A way to know God
            ---A Christian communal activity
                --Linked to ancient tradition and ritual
                --Linked to other people
                        --In various forms
                --Words, thoughts, hoping, singing, whispering, action
            ---Related to images of God
                --In Jesus
                --Trustworthy and loving
                --Guiding and protecting
                --Listening
                --Holy
```

The Christian School - Analysis of Meaning levels two and three

Individual conceptions of category and properties relating to the meaning of prayer were

determined by the researcher from the three data sources.   These individual concepts of

the meaning of prayer are presented in the table below, followed by some remarks

regarding the similarities and differences which lead to the third stage of analysis where

the analyses of individual participants were combined into one representation of category

and properties which relate to the whole school group.

Table 4.4 :
Christian School - Participants' responses

Participants' codes	Category- Prayer is…	Properties
G1	"Personal conversation" with the God of the community who is trusted	Part of family life Experienced in Church – confession of sins
G2	A community activity of communication with God who helps and heals	An indication of "knowing God" Personal communication "from the heart" "Anointing with oil" "In tongues"
G3	Personal and communal "talking to the Lord" who always listens and helps	Helpful for others Personal "inspiration"
G4	"Special talking" to the God of the community who hears and wants to help	With "concentration" and honesty "In tongues"
G5	Personal and communal communication with a loving "God of joy"	"Praise and worship" "In tongues" Other forms in other religions
B1	Thinking "from the heart" to the God of the community who hears and answers	In "joy" Showing commitment to God
B2	"Talking to Jesus" who brings personal and communal, peace, joy and mercy	Being part of the faith community "Laying on of hands" Personal mystical experience
B3	"A good time of talking to Jesus", someone to trust	"Care for the inner spirit" -A way to "let the bad out" Showing commitment to God
B4	"Knowing God" of the community who hears and helps	Talking from the heart In Church – special help in miracles
B5	"A worship form of speech" personal and communal	Indicating belief and trust in Jesus In tongues In Church – "praise and worship"

As with the first school, the combined findings from each participant were compared and synthesised. Once again there was found to be a dual and related emphasis on the communal and the personal aspects of the meaning of prayer. The data from the interviews displayed a wide variety of personal experiences of prayer which the participants related in a natural manner. Each participant had at least one story of the importance of prayer, many relating two or more stories from their own experience or the experience of friends and relatives. They were often related in the interview with long and

complex detail.   As with the participants from the Catholic school the meaning of the personal experiences of prayer were associated with the communal understanding and experience of prayer.   However, some differences were apparent in the expression of the Christian tradition linked with this school, compared with the experience of prayer in Church associated with the Catholic school.   This group of participants all acknowledged the importance of the Church worship as extempore praise and joy associated with the meaning of prayer.   There was no mention made of the use of liturgical prayer from the past.   Other aspects of prayer familiar to this group from their worship tradition were expressed as standing with arms raised, praying "in tongues", "anointing with oil" and "laying on of hands" in intercessory prayer.   Some quotations selected for their level of energetic expression demonstrate aspects of the meaning of prayer in the experience of this group: "Mum taught me when I was three . . . I heard her praying at night . . . having worship . . . I heard her praying and I learnt to pray . . . living in a Christian family" (G1). "Pray because there's nobody else to ask . . . if it's really important . . . the lord can help…the lord can fix it" (G3).   "You don't have to (shut your eyes) it just helps you concentrate" (G4).   "There are heaps of different ways to pray" (G5).   "One night I saw an angel . . . (I was) in grade three . . . I was with my sister . . . I saw the heavens come . . . and an angel came down . . . the angel said to me 'may there be peace, joy and mercy on this house' . . . we went inside and started to pray to Jesus" (B2).   "I just felt better . . . used to run around and be noisy . . . I felt happier . . . peaceful inside" (B1).   "In side you, you have this spirit . . . keeps you alive and runs your body . . . (if you don't care for this spirit) one day your spirit will just drop and you will be really scared all of the time . . . have no faith . . . and it will be really hard" (B3).   "God has a plan . . . cycle of life . . . God knows . . . in safe hands" (B4)   "A way of talking to Him, as you can't really see Him 'till you get to heaven" (B5)

Through the Grounded Theory method of constant comparison of the data presented in the first level of analysis and Table 4.4 a combined representation emerged for this group which is displayed in Figure 4.2

Figure 4.2 : Christian School- Combined representation

The meaning of prayer-
CATEGORY – Personal and communal communication with God- the Lord
PROPERTIES---Deep personal connection
                --Showing commitment to God
                --With sincerity
                --Asking and thanking
                --Giving spiritual benefit
                --In tongues
          ---Christian community activity
                --Praise and worship
                --Helping others
                    -Anointing with oil
                    -Laying on of hands
         ---Connected to the being of God
                --Known in Jesus
                --Trustworthy
                --Hears and answers
                --Healer and Miracle-worker
                --Loving and Joyous

The Government School l- Analysis of Meaning levels two and three

Individual conceptions of category and properties relating to the meaning of prayer were determined by the researcher from the three data sources.   These individual concepts of the meaning of prayer are presented in the table below, followed by some remarks regarding the similarities and differences which lad to the third stage of analysis where the analyses of individual participants were combined into one representation of category and properties which relate to the whole school group.

Table 4.5 :
Government School - Participants' responses combined findings

Participants' codes	Category- Prayer is…	Properties
G1	Personal and communal "hopes" and wishes expressing trust in God who will "make everything right one day"	Thinking from the soul, heart or feelings Through inspiration Part of being alone- at night or in Church
G2	Personal requests from the heart to God	Wishing, Thinking. Asking Seen in religion and the media
G3	A personal way to "connect" with God who will be "with you in difficulties"	A way to react to death and distress Words from your heart
G4	A personal or communal "cry for Help" to God who can help	Expressing feelings- happy sad and angry Ritual in the Christian faith community Other rituals for other religions
G5	A personal "thinking from within" which shows hope and gives hope in God	Connected to different religions Part of human well-being and social Relationships
B1	A religious way of thinking showing belief and hope in God	"Messages in the brain" "telepathically" transported An expression of hope in an "afterlife"
B2	A personal communication indicating belief in God from the Christian tradition	Seeking power to help and protect Visualizing and Hoping
B3	"Something everyone does and religious people do more" to gain help from God	Talking to God as a master -showing respect Thinking God is real Different religions have different forms
B4	A personal or communal message that helps you "go to God"	Deep concentration - A kind of hoping In Church "God's home"
B5	A personal and communal communication with God the giver of life who listens and watches over	Expressing feelings of joy and hope "to get sins forgiven" - in Church at Christmas

The data from the participants at this school showed considerable difference in the understanding of prayer when compared with the responses from participants in the Catholic and Christian schools.   Apart from one reference to the celebration of Christmas in Church, and some brief references to being in a Church, the experience of communal worship was not mentioned as part of their understanding of prayer.   There were no explicit references to particular ritual prayers or to familiar aspects of prayer in the religious community.   From among this group of participants, one stated that she did go

to Church sometimes with her family, another went once a year at Christmas, one had been baptised but had not been to Church since and two others had been at some time in their lives. During the interviews most participants recognised going to Church as a way to learn to pray but this was usually expressed as an objective observation. Other aspects of understanding were expressed by some participants in relation to the way other "religions" prayed. For example one participant showed understanding of the Jewish tradition of offering prayer at the "Wailing Wall" and another spoke of a religion where "they use a mat".

The dominant understanding of prayer for this group of participants can be identified from the data as relating to personal or individual belief, hope and connection with God. There are constant references in the data to the image of God who cares and watches over, which appears to be a similar understanding to that expressed by the participants from the previous schools. Although Church was mentioned, there was an absence of reference to the person of Jesus as a part of the image of God as seen in the previous schools. Some quotations from the interviews display this individual aspect of understanding the meaning of prayer: "It's like talking to someone you can really trust" (G1). "Not really (seen anyone) praying…but two of the girls in my class go to church" (G2). "Prayers come from people's emotions…thought…goes up to God" (G4). Most of the people who stop praying commit suicide…stop praying…give up hope (G5). "Prayers are in the brain…thinking…transporting them telepathically" (B1). "Eyes shut helps you visualise" (B2). "I have prayed but I am not religious" (B3). "Prayers come from like your brain…like a wish…but not in a greedy way" (B5).

The categories and properties of this group of participants have been summarised according to the emphasis of the data to form the Figure 4.3.

Figure 4.3 : Government School - Combined representation

The meaning of prayer:
CATEGORY- A way to connect to God
PROPERTIES---Deep personal expression
                --Of hopes and feelings
                    -From the heart and soul
                    -In the face of death
                --Asking for help
                --A way of gaining hope and love
           ---Associated with the image of God
                --Forgiver
                --Protector and helper
                --Master
                --The giver of life
           ---Found in religion
                --In the Christian Church
                --In different forms of traditional rituals

The Independent School - Analysis of Meaning levels two and three

Individual conceptions of category and properties relating to the meaning of prayer were determined by the researcher from the three data sources. These individual concepts of the meaning of prayer are presented in the table below, followed by some remarks regarding the similarities and differences which lead to the third stage of analysis, where the analyses of individual participants were combined into one conception of category and properties which relate to the whole school group.

Table 4.6 :
Independent School - Participants' responses combined findings

Participants' codes	Category- Prayer is…	Properties
G1	Personal thoughts "from the Heart" you tell God	On important occasions- weddings or funerals An expression of feelings- sad, angry, happy or sorry
G2	A "different kind of language" used to send ideas to your personal God who is trusted to help	A natural "human right" – talking to a "Father" talking from the feelings Associated with religion- Christian tradition in the media A way to contact those who have died
G3	Individual or communal communication showing belief and hope in God	In your mind and in words A reaction to sadness
G4	A "religious act" showing trust in God who helps	"Natural" communication from deep feelings Different religions have different types of prayer Associated with the after life
G5	A "message religious people tell God", asking and thanking	Many forms of respect in different religions Used in times of national emergency
B1	Individual or communal Communication showing belief in God who helps	Expressing feelings - anger, thanks, need, apology "Other cultures" have different forms
B2	An individual or communal expression of feelings to God who helps	Asking for help in different ways in different pa world Giving thanks in Church- Christmas and Easter
B3	Individual or communal words sung or spoken to God who helps	Comes from within as "an instinct" – when "in Trouble" Connected with the belief of "past generations"
B4	Personal or communal "thoughts from your soul" to God who helps	Expressing belief and hope in God When in a "critical condition"
B5	Individual and communal communication with God who can be trusted	An expression of belief as part of a religious community Something to do "when you can't do anything else" "Comes from your brain"

As with the Government school, the participants from the Independent school showed understandings of the meaning of prayer in personal and often creative forms of thinking. There was agreement on the idea of prayer as directed to a good God who

helps, but this was largely viewed as a personal activity using informal thoughts or words without reference to a religious form of authority in a faith community.   The prayer experience of the fortnightly chapel service of the school was briefly mentioned by three of the ten participants.   The personal involvement required was expressed as a quiet manner with heads down and joining in the "Amen" at the conclusion.   Two of these participants also mentioned Church as a place where prayer could be learned, and one other participant from this group had been to Church for both a funeral and a wedding. Five of the participants recognised the different forms of prayer that could be associated with different religions found in Australia and in different parts of the world. Participants from this school in an objective manner which, when taken with other aspects of the data, could be seen to indicate a lower level of personal commitment to a faith community when compared with the participants from either the Catholic or Christian schools.   During the interview, three of the participants at this school informed the researcher that they were not religious.   This did not mean that prayer was not important, as all said that they used prayer in a personal way.   Only one participant said that prayer was now no longer an important part of her life, while the other participants recognised prayer as part of their ongoing life.   There were various images of God associated with prayer, with a common understanding of God as the good giver of life who could be trusted.   Some participants recognised God as active in compassion, one spoke of the holiness of God.

The words "religion", "religious act" and "religious people" were used by some participants in relation to the image of God.   Two participants mentioned God in relation to the afterlife.   One participant articulated an idiosyncratic image of God as her "dog" who had died two years ago.   At the time of the dog's death, the participant related a long story of her sadness and prayer at night which "comforted" her and "helped to dry my tears".   Now when this participant prays she thinks of God as an image of her dog (explaining that when dog is spelt backwards it is god).   Her discussion about her image of God indicates the complex nature of her belief.   She expresses the idea that prayer is important as a way of just "talking out" feelings, but at the same time recognises the need for the personal connection to a being that loves and responds to her personally.

As stated earlier in this chapter, the school environment cannot be singled out as the primary factor in forming the understanding of prayer for the participants. Rather the school environment chosen for children reflects one aspect of a complex environment of religious beliefs in the home and family network as well as other socio-economic factors. However in this school there was a common understanding expressed that prayer was largely an individual activity. Some quotations from the interview add to these findings. "I have heard…mostly seen on TV that people pray before they go to bed" (G1) "Maybe they pray because they think…I am a person…no one can take that privilege from me…God is up there to help me…to love me…He cannot do every thing I say…He's a Father" (G2). "You don't learn…you just already know…naturally" (G4). "At school we do it…I guess" (G5). "You don't really learn it, all you do is say a few words…(any words?)…apart from bad words" (B2). "(When I was badly hurt I prayed) just comes out… from the back of my head" (B3). "Auntie came around…she goes to church…she did it with us (prayed for mum)…no special words…just hope mum gets better and all that" (B4). "Prayer is like a big thing…80% of people do it"(B5).

The categories and properties from the individual participants at this school were combined and refined to give a composite representation for this group of participants in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.4 : Independent School - Combined representation

The meaning of prayer:
CATEGORY- Communication with a God who helps
PROPERTIES---A religious act taking different forms
        --All over the world
        --Used in rites of passage
        -- Associated with the afterlife
    ---A personal expression
        --Of hope and need
        --Thanks
        --Apology
        --From the heart, mind and feelings
        --A human instinct
    ---Associated with the image of God as
        --Trustworthy, Giver of life

The Jewish School - Analysis of Meaning levels two and three
Individual conceptions of category and properties relating to the meaning of prayer were determined by the researcher from the three data sources. These individual concepts of

the meaning of prayer are presented in the table below. They are followed by some remarks regarding the similarities and differences which led to the third stage of analysis, where the individual representations of the participants were combined into one conception of category and properties which is appropriate to the whole school group.

Table 4.7 :
Jewish School - Participants' responses

Participants' Codes	Category- Prayer is…	Properties
G1	A communal connection with the God of order	Associated with religion taking different forms In Hebrew- strict ritual with gender Differences from "our forefathers"
G2	Communication with the God Of the community who cares	Ritual in Hebrew – in the synagogue Part of ancient religion giving a sense of Jewish identity Forgiveness at Yom Kippur
-G3	Words with a "very strong Meaning" used in talking to the holy God of the Jewish tradition	Universal activity recognizing God as above and human need Many forms- asking, telling, thanking, feeling, action From the Siddur - ancient tradition -in Synagogue Gender differences in leadership
G4	A way of connecting to the holy God of the faith tradition	Thanking and asking Following the ritual -In Hebrew
G5	"Trying to speak" to the God of the Jewish community	Connection to the past - From the Siddur – in Hebrew Expressing respect and feelings Gender differences
B1	"Speaking my feelings" to the good God of the Jewish tradition who is trusted	Connection to the ancient faith community From the Siddur and Torah in Hebrew Strict ritual shows respect Other religions have similar ideas said in "different ways"
B2	Communicating with the God of the community- asking, thanking, saying sorry	From the Siddur with progressive levels of understanding for children Connection with Jews world-wide and the land of Israel
B3	A "connection" with the God of the Tradition- the life-giver	A sign of belonging to the faith community From the Siddur and your "own thoughts" Linking with the ancient "forefathers" Of benefit in countering the sins of life at Yom Kippur
B4	A communal and personal expression of "feelings" to	A sign of belonging to the faith community Need for proper intention and strict following

	God as the ruler	of the Siddur
		From ancient times an "awareness of gratitude"
B5	A communal way to "get Closer" to God the creator	From the Siddur/ Torah in Hebrew
		Expressing respect, praise and need
		In Synagogue -In the family
		Forgiveness at Yom Kippur

The analysis of data from the participants attending the Jewish school displays a common understanding of the Jewish faith tradition. Three participants expressed awareness of other forms of prayer from other faith traditions, but these references were brief and most of the interview time was devoted to an explanation of the complexity of the Jewish ritual of prayer. The participants were articulate and in most cases showed enthusiasm about the subject of prayer. When comparing the time taken with each interview the participants from the Jewish school required greater time and usually the researcher needed to conclude the interview while the participant was willing to continue. When the researcher analysed the body language and verbal intensity shown on the video, this group of participants were observed to use greater amounts of gesture, eye contact and eye movement as well as louder tone of voice and clarity of expression. Once again it cannot be claimed that the school has caused this difference. There are certain distinctive aspects of teaching within the school about what it means to be Jewish but there are also many other complex factors involved. Some of these could relate to family socio-economic status, wide-ranging cultural experiences of living in different countries and general academic respect for research. The question about the animation of the children in the Jewish school when talking about prayer could form the basis of more comparative studies.

From the data it can be seen that there is an emphasis on the importance of the community. As indicated through the observation notes, (Appendix C) the school curriculum is linked with the Synagogue worship, Hebrew language, stories of Jewish history and awareness of the current circumstances in Israel. During the interviews repeated reference was made to the importance of being Jewish, a sense of connection with the "forefathers" and the world-wide Jewish community made visible through the agreed use of the Siddur (prayer book) and Hebrew language. Although the personal and

individual involvement in prayer was part of the understanding of the meaning of prayer greater emphasis was given to the communal practice through the traditional teaching on prayer.

As with the Christian school, the data generated by these participants indicated agreement among the family, home and worship centre.   The participants' interviews disclosed their environment as a consistent experience where faith and prayer were valued or taken as the norm by family, school and friends.   The particular Orthodox Jewish form of traditional prayer was explained in different words, but there was a similarity of understanding regarding the meaning of prayer from this tradition.   This was demonstrated in the sentence completion exercise.   The sentence fragment "I wouldn't pray…" caused some difficulty, as for the participants in this group prayer three times a day was usual.   Two participants indicated they wouldn't pray if they were very sick, sad or bored and one said she wouldn't pray on Sunday.   The other participants had difficulty completing this sentence, two participants indicated that they wouldn't pray "in the bathroom" as an unhygienic place inappropriate for the important act of prayer.   One participant stated that he wouldn't pray if it was not the right time of the day for prayer.

The following quotations indicate some of the variety within the Jewish way of understanding the meaning of prayer for these participants.   "Our prayers came from our forefathers . . . lots of people made the prayers . . . like King David" (G1).   "(Prayer) depends if you really mean it . . . trying to feel and . . . doing . . . actually saying the words . . . no point if you don't mean it" (G2).   "We have faith in God . . . gives us a special feeling, because God chose us and we agreed to take His religion" (G3).   "You say it from the book (Siddur) . . . you don't make your own ones . . . but you say in your head for example while you are saying sorry you think in your head what you have done wrong" (G5).   (Prayers of other religions) "You can't exactly compare them . . . .they are completely different . . . I think all prayers are the same . . . except they just say it in different way . . . this is my God . . . I love Him . . . He's the only one . . . that's what they all probably say" (B1).   "If you do pray you get a benefit from it . . . I know that He (God) does pay a lot of attention to the kids when they pray . . . it's good to hear young kids praying (B2).   "I like the songs . . . comes from thousands of years ago" (B3).

"When you open the Siddur . . . they (prayers) float into your mind . . . they hover there…then they float up to heaven" (B5).

From the categories and properties of the participants identified in Table 4.8 a synthesis was constructed for this group of participants.   The synthesis emerges through constant comparison both across the data from this group and back through the raw data of the individual participants.   The synthesis of the understanding of the participants from the Jewish school is displayed in the combined representation of Figure 4.5.

Figure 4.5 : Jewish School - Combined representation

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The meaning of prayer:
CATEGORY- Communication with God known in the tradition
PROPERTIES ---A communal activity
                    --Linking past and present
                    --Giving a sense of Jewish identity
                    --A complex set ritual in Hebrew
                    --Taking other forms in different religions
               ---A personal activity
                    --Expressing feelings
                            -Praise, need and guilt
                    --With proper intentions
                            -Coming close to God
                    --In many forms -Asking, thanking, singing, feeling and action
               ---Associated with the image of God
                    --Creator and ruler, Holy, Caring and trustworthy, Righteous
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The Muslim School - Analysis of Meaning stages two and three

Individual conceptions of category and properties relating to the meaning of prayer were determined by the researcher from the three data sources.   These individual concepts of the meaning of prayer are presented in the table below.   They are followed by some remarks regarding the similarities and differences which led to the third stage of analysis, where the individual representations of the participants were combined into one conception of category and properties which is appropriate to the whole school group.

Table 4.8 :
Muslim School - Participants' responses combined findings

Participants' codes	Category- Prayer is…	Properties
G1	A "central part" of Islamic religion showing respect for the holy God	Brings "rewards in heaven" Ritual five times a day in Arabic "Proper" clothing for women "Focus on right speech"
G2	Communicating to the God of the tradition to worship and "please Him"	Prayer is used differently in other traditions To please God brings eternal reward Ritual washing, actions and words in Arabic "Proper" clothing for women
G3	A communal way to "praise" God to "please" Him	Joining the faith community Linked to festivals and fasting A "good deed"
G4	The special communal way to "concentrate" showing respect for God	Thanksgiving coming from the heart In the community - In Arabic -Special dress and ritual
G5	A way to show "respect" and "obedience" to your God of the faith tradition	A good deed of value on the Day of Judgment Linking to the world-wide faith community and history "Proper" clothing and ritual -Five times a day in Arabic Involving proper intention of a "clean heart"
B1	"One of the most important pillars Islam" connecting you to a holy God	Complex ritual of words and movement Communal ritual five times a day –needing good intention A sign of dedication to God
B2	A special "concentration" on the great God of the Islamic religion	From the Q'ran and the holy Prophet A way to "get good deed and go to heaven" Five times a day facing Mecca
B3	The communal way "we Communicate" to God in Heaven	Sharing with father and grandfather A way to please God and "go to heaven" In Arabic, five times a day with proper intention
B4	Communal worship to God so you can "go into heaven"	A pillar of Islamic religion from the Q'ran Joining "with my dad"
B5	"Something important you have to do for the God" of the tradition	Showing belief and love for God Respect for God through concentration Part of the faith community - Five times a day

The data from the participants at the Muslim school showed, as at the Jewish
school, the combination of ritual from the tradition and personal involvement.   In this case

the communal understanding of Islamic prayer ritual was the common feature, but the understanding of 'proper' intention in prayer displayed an element of active personal involvement.

As with the participants from the Christian and Jewish schools, the participants from the Muslim school expressed a strong sense of congruence between the teachings of the home, school and worship centre. The importance of following the prayer ritual five times a day was expressed by all participants. This was linked by some to the Friday worship at the Mosque, and by many to the community celebration of the end of Ramadan (which was to take place shortly after the conclusion of the interview period). The link with family members was another aspect of the data which emerged in all cases in this school. Sometimes the link was intimate, and two of the male participants spoke of their fathers teaching them the prayer ritual and reading the Q'ran with them. Other participants spoke of the family going to Mecca or special prayers for illness in the family. As with the data from the participants in the Jewish school, the fifth question of the sentence completion exercise caused difficulty "I would not pray because…". For the male participants there was hesitation in completing this sentence. Three male participants said that they could not imagine a time when they would not pray. One participant could imagine not praying if he was in hospital seriously ill, while another could imagine missing the early morning prayer if "tempted by Satan" to stay in bed. The female participants had other ideas about this sentence, one said she would not pray if someone had died or there was terrible illness. The other four female participants stated that they would not pray if they were menstruating, the reason being given that they would not be clean, so prayer was inappropriate. The serious way in which this question was answered was an indication of the strength of the traditional understanding of the "cleanliness" aspect of prayer for these participants. It is speculated that the many common responses from this group were a reflection on the common beliefs held in the environment of home school and worship place.

The gender differences in relation to prayer were noted in the interview data from participants in both the Jewish and Muslim schools. The female participants at both of these schools expressed positive experiences and commitment to prayer in their faith tradition. However, the female participants from the Muslim school all spoke at some

length of the need for 'proper' clothing when praying, and the physical cleanliness requirement excluded them from prayer during menstruation.   These matters were freely discussed and seemed to be accepted without any hesitation.   The clothing and cleanliness requirements were not evident in the interviews from the participants in the Jewish school but the male leadership was a matter of some interest and discussion.   Three of the female participants from the Jewish school discussed the different roles for men and women in communal prayer with varying degrees of interest in the idea of change.   One female participant was involved in a female prayer group, where young Jewish women are taught to lead worship and read from the Torah.   The extensive data from this interview displayed the participant's interest in the gender/leadership debate.   The female participants in the Catholic and Christian school did not mention any gender difference in relation to the meaning of prayer.   For the participants at the Government and Independent schools, where discussion of communal prayer formed a very small part of the data collected, gender difference was not mentioned.   In these schools there was no evidence that the meaning of personal prayer was affected by gender.   The observations from Appendix C add further details to the complex issue of gender identification through prayer.   This study involved limited discussion time with a limited number of participants.   It is suggested that the understanding of gender awareness through prayer requires greater investigation, as this is a complex culture phenomena.   It may well form the basis of future studies.

Some quotations from the participants in the Muslim school group add to the findings of Table 4.9.   "You can't think of anything around you . . .just focus on our right speech . . . focus on God . . . must look down at the mat" (G1).   "Before (prayer) do ablutions . . . clean ourselves to face the Lord . . . every time you pray . . . if there is no water you can use dirt or sand" (G2).   "The messenger of Allah told us to do it" (G3). "Prayers come from the heart . . . just to be thankful for being alive" (G4).   "You have to pray five times a day to be a Muslim (G5).   "It (prayer) brings you closer to God . . . great feeling of contentment . . . you feel a good person" (B1).   "He is One, He is merciful, He is beneficial" (B4).   "If you are Muslim and don't pray . . . not straight away . . . go to hell for seven days . . . but it feels like seven years . . . then go to heaven" (B5).

Following the process of constant comparison of data the combined category and properties from the participants in the Muslim school is displayed in Figure 4.6.

Figure 4.6 : Muslim School - Combined representation

The meaning of prayer:
CATEGORY- Communication to please the holy God of the tradition
PROPERTIES---A central part of belonging to Islam
      --Strict ritual, Worship
      --Showing respect and obedience
      --Linked to festivals
      --The way to heaven
      --Linked to history
      --Linked to the family
    ---A personal intention
      --With feeling
      --With thanksgiving
    ---Associated with the image of God
      --Strong, Great, Good

The Composite Interpretation from the Data

    The constant comparison in the method of Grounded Theory was used to summarise and synthesise the different levels of data. The final theory emerging from the combination of the categories and properties of the six school groups of participants is displayed in Figure 4.7:

Figure 4.7 : The meaning of prayer

CATEGORY -Communication with the good God

PROPERTIES---Understood through faith traditions with defined images of God
      --God as: Above, Holy, Lord, Giver of life and Judge
      --Personal God as: Lover, Healer, Forgiver, Guide, Protector
      --Known in the person of Jesus
    ---Understood through personal images of God
    ---Expressing social connection with the faith community
    ---Expressing personal feelings and hopes
      --Praise
      --Grief
      --Need
      --Guilt

Part Two - Discussion
The Illustration Exercise

General Comments

The literature on secularisation in contemporary life by Bouma (2002), Fenn (2001) and Hervieu-Leger (2000) showed that traditional religious practice has declined. There was therefore an expectation that prayer, as associated with religion, would not be highly valued and therefore that this exercise would pose difficulty for some. For the participants who acknowledged coming from a religious home and going to a school where religious education and practice were valued, it was understandable that images of people praying would be taken seriously and completed with apparent ease. However, the illustrations show that all participants completed the task and displayed various ideas associated with prayer (Appendix D and Table 4.2.) Even the participants from the two school groups where neither families nor the school program provided many experiences of prayer, completed illustrations of people praying with attention to detail. It could be speculated that this awareness of prayer was generated in a similar way to the "Hawthorn effect" outlined by Moore (2000). That is, participants showed respect and care for the subject under discussion just because it was receiving attention through the research. This explanation is held as possible and should be considered in relation to the findings from the other areas of data collection.

However, as stated by Fenn (2001) and Hervieu- Leger (2000) there is another interpretation that perhaps the secularizing process may result in a new emphasis on prayer. That is, as the traditional faith systems lose some of their authority, a vacuum of faith is created. As the cultural religious practices fade in public significance other forms of spirituality, in a privatised form, may continue or emerge. The illustrations of prayer could show the ongoing spiritual quest within the secular culture.

At present it should be noted that all participants completed the illustration exercise and showed, through the different drawings, understanding of prayer as an integral aspect of human practice and experience.

Connection between the Illustrations and the Religious Teaching of the Tradition

Many common features of the illustrations can be observed in relation to the different faith traditions represented in the school groups. One example is the use of a prayer book in all of the illustrations from the participants in the Jewish school. This feature of the illustrations can be directly related to the use of the Siddur as the centre of worship and prayer as stated by Donin (1980).

Another example is the illustration of smiling faces in the majority of the 27 illustrations by participants in the Christian school (CS), compared with only one smiling face in the 16 illustrations by the participants from the Muslim school. It seems that in one school prayer is shown as a happy activity and in the other school as a solemn activity. In this case the possible reasons are not so easily identified. Both Raji al Faruqi (1992b) and Tabbarah (1988) emphasised the solemn responsibility of correct prayer in the Muslim tradition. There are many aspects of proper deportment, language and mental intention needed for prayer to be acceptable to the Holy God of the Islamic tradition, therefore smiling in a relaxed manner is inappropriate. On the other hand it could be argued that Islam is a minority religion in Australia with additional aspects of anxiety related to some negative public opinion, because of current media coverage associated with terrorism. For this reason, prayer and worship in the Islamic tradition may seem a serious matter where smiling is inappropriate in the situation of contemporary Australian life.

The illustrations from participants in the catholic school displayed a strong common view about the posture for prayer, with hands together while kneeling. In general the students from this school drew detailed and personal images of figures praying, showing the meaning of prayer as connected to the Christian tradition. Four participants drew speech balloons from the figures. One balloon expressed feelings, one a "Hail Mary for someone", one was a specific prayer "dear God, pleas (sic) help to stop war between Iraq and the U.S." The final balloon showed the prayer going to the face of God behind the gates of heaven. Nine of the twelve illustrations displayed positive smiling faces, and most had a sense of reverence shown in the bent head and the kneeling posture. Rahner's (1958) definition of prayer as "the raising of the heart and mind to God" was appropriate for these illustrations.

The illustrations from participants in the Independent and government schools (Appendix D) were detailed and many images were drawn, but the quality of the illustrations in these schools demonstrated a more cartoon-like or simple pattern when compared to the other schools. About one half of the illustrations from the independent and government schools were drawn without facial features, and of those illustrations with facial features, almost one half were solemn. There is the possibility that the lack of facial features indicates that prayer has a lower sense of personal significance for these students who are not connected to a school or family faith tradition. The importance of the face and facial features has been noted by Heller (1986) in his research using children's drawings, he suggested that the illustration of the face denoted a relationship with the figure displayed. Investigating the reasons for these differences is an area for further research.

The illustrations from the government school depicted more strongly than in the others schools a multifaith dimension to the participants' awareness of prayer. One participant depicted the "normal way" to pray and "another way". From the context of the discussion, the use of the word "normal" was seen to refer to Christianity, this is the professed religion of most Australians as reported by Bouma (2002). Another participant expressed prayer in three different images: a standing figure "asking for a raise" in salary, a "Muslim way" on a mat and a "Jewish way" standing beside a wall. Another participant drew a person sitting in prayer and when asked if there were other ways to pray drew a cross-legged "meditation" position "from another country" (GS B4). One male subject drew the traditional kneeling figure with hands together facing a cross but put the figure on a mat and called it the "Jewish way". The reasons for the more evident multicultural awareness amongst these participants are unclear. Some understanding might have come from a recent Christian religious education lesson about the "Wailing Wall" which was referred to during some of the interviews, but further investigation of this question is needed. The theory of Fenn (2001) may have some relevance; this suggested that the secular emphasis in education may bring about a greater multifaith understanding and acceptance. Fenn suggested that when there is little formal religious education, awareness and understanding of the sacred is sought and gathered from many sources.

The illustrations drawn by participants from the Christian school raised another issue in relation to the meaning of prayer in connection to the faith community. According to Bouma (2002) the Pentecostal Christian tradition is the fastest growing Church in Australia, and it is possible that the illustrations from this school demonstrate both the positive confidence of a growing tradition and that prayer is an important aspect of that tradition. When compared with the illustrations from the other school groups, the fact of the large number of illustrations is noted. Ten participants produced 27 illustrations of prayer showing prayer in many forms. Five figures were kneeling, five standing with arms raised in praise, six were seated, three were in school, four illustrations showed the participant in bed, one was walking down the street, one was being anointed with oil and one was experiencing the laying on of hands. As well as the variety of subject matter, a sense of energy and engagement in the task of drawing was observed from the video-tapes. The illustrations shown in Appendix D were not completed with care, but variety and attention to detail were evident. Many situations of prayer were illustrated and the illustrations all had complete facial expressions. It seems likely that this is a reflection of a tradition where prayer plays a significant part, taking many forms both personally and in community.

As noted earlier, the illustrations from participants at the Jewish school had a distinctive character in that all showed the prayer book (Siddur). As well as the evidence of the Siddur, other aspects of the tradition were also shown in the illustrations. The boys all wore a Kipa (head covering), three had Hebrew words written as part of the illustration, one illustration showed the bowing action and one wore a Tefilla (portion of the Torah worn on the forehead). All but one of the illustrations were drawn showing full facial features, and six of the ten illustrations showed the subject smiling. Eight illustrations showed the subject standing, one was sitting and one kneeling. This last illustration was explained by the participant as a "universal" way to pray, "not a Jewish way" it shows humans are "closer to the ground"(JS G3). This drawing showed a very modern looking girl with ear-rings, tee shirt and jeans kneeling with eyes closed holding the Siddur. It was a combination of a Jewish form of prayer using the Siddur, with posture showing multifaith awareness, while wearing the clothing of the contemporary culture. This could be related to Weisel's (1996) view of the Jewish prayer as being

lived out in the contemporary experiences of life. The Jewish pattern of prayer was portrayed positively in this group of illustrations. The illustrations from this group demonstrated agreement on the reality of prayer focused in the tradition of the Hebrew prayer book.

The illustrations from the Muslim school were similarly distinctive in portraying the school faith tradition. One student showed the seven positions of the prayer ritual, the other nine illustrations showed a single figure standing. Serious facial expressions were frequently shown in the drawings by participants from this school. All illustrations, except one, had full facial features. One female participant's illustration shows a smiling face, and two other girls started to draw smiles but then changed them to straight mouths; but all of the illustrations drawn by the male participants had solemn faces. A total of eight illustrations show the hands clasped in front of the chest and five illustrations show the eyes looking down. All of the figures were drawn standing, and the prayer mat is evident in three. Of the five illustrations drawn by the female participants, four were dressed in Hijab. The fifth illustration appeared to be a male figure wearing long trousers and this figure had no facial features. It seems that these illustrations show the uniform position to start prayer with attention to the serious intention of proper thinking and action entailed in the meaning of prayer for Muslim participants. This is in agreement with the literature from the Islamic tradition by Abdul ala Maududi (1982) and Raji al Faruqi (1992b) where prayer is viewed as a solemn ritual, and a responsibility, one of the five pillars of Islam .

Sentence Completion Exercise

The sentence exercise was treated by many subjects as a form of school activity almost like a test. When viewing the video, a noticeably different body language was displayed by the participants when the exercise was introduced. Many participants displayed rapid eye movements, looking up and down, with an uncertain and hesitant attitude as if searching for the "right" words. For this reason it was considered that the answers given in the sentence completion exercise might have been for some participants a less spontaneous response to the topic under study. Although the responses of the participants show that prayer is seen to have meaning, significance and importance, it is

proposed that the sentence completion exercise should not be taken separately, but rather combined with both the informal interview and the illustrations to give a more accurate or composite understanding of the meaning of prayer for each individual participant.   This is the concept of triangulation addressed by Moore (2000) where verification becomes more likely using a variety of collection methods.   The comparison of the illustrations, the memos from the video data and the sentence completion exercise provide a form of internal validation of the data.

The Interview

      As observed earlier in this chapter, certain questions proved to be very helpful in eliciting energetic engagement from the participants.   These questions are discussed below :

      Is the expression "O my God!" a form of prayer?
      This question was related to the common expression used on TV of "O my God!" or "My God!"   Participants were asked to consider whether these words constituted a kind of prayer.   Approximately 80% of subjects responded that it was not a real prayer.   This led to further discussion about the nature of authentic prayer, eliciting many ideas relating to the thought that prayer concerns feelings towards God not just the saying of words.   Some participants reflected that it might depend on the circumstances in which the words were uttered.   If the person were frightened or worried it could be that the words were a prayer.   Perhaps in a state of surprise, the exclamation might be a reference to God as the creator of all, so the new experience could be placed into a frame of reference within the world of God's creation.   Some participants gave an answer from the tradition that the expression was "Taking the Lord's name in vain" (Exodus 20:7). Most could articulate the meaning of this statement as offending God by not being respectful, using a "kind of swear word".   The response to this question in the interview data showed an awareness of God as transcendent as stated by Donin, "Father in Heaven, to my maker, the Holy One . . . The supreme being" (Donin, 1980).   This image of God can be identified in all of the traditions involved in the study (Abdalati, 1996; Berryman, 1999; Darby, 1996; Foster, 1992)

Where do prayers come from?

Participants in the Christian, government and independent schools commonly identified prayer as personal, coming "from my heart" "from my mind" "from my feelings".   The participants from the Catholic school had the added sense of the traditional origin of prayers such as the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary".   In the Catholic school group, the two aspects of personal words and traditional words existed together. For the Jewish and Muslim participants, the origin of prayer was closely associated with the tradition, and had a connection with ancient history, the language and the forefathers (Raji al Faruqi, 1992a; Twerski, 2001).   For many participants coming from the Jewish and Muslim traditions, there was also a conception of a world-wide sharing in prayer since people all over the world from their tradition were saying the same words of prayer in the same language.   Most of the subjects from the Muslim and Jewish traditions identified times within the ritual prayers of the ancient tradition when they could present their own feelings to God.   To varying degrees therefore, prayer was viewed as having meaning both in personal communication and in traditional or communal forms of communication with God.

Where do prayers go?

The simple response to this question, given by many participants, was that prayers go to God.   One participant suggested that prayer was "a form of telepathy" going to God, another viewed prayer as "thought rays" or "a sixth sense", while another thought of prayer as like the "electro-sensitivity" of sharks, and another viewed prayer as "a special language of feelings".   One participant could visualise prayers as "floating around the Church" then going to God, or another thought that prayers come out in words which then "dissolve" into a kind of mysterious "fire smoke".   This evidence points to children being prompted to think about a transcendent dimension when considering prayer. Examination of the video-taped interviews enabled the researcher to appreciate the reaction of the subjects to this question.   The evidence shows there was often a quiet pause, with the participant looking back and forth, often placing a hand to the head or face and then offering tentative and sometimes repetitive words in the answer.   It is suggested that these behavioural indicators demonstrate the participant's independent

thinking about the mystery of prayer, which can be related to the work of Coles (1990) and Hart (2003).

How many people in the world pray?

This question was used with a picture showing hundreds of small faces representing all of the people of the world.   The question was designed to elicit both the perception of the degree to which prayer was used and the reasons why people prayed. Participants who had only been concerned with their own world of school and family were invited to imagine all of the people of the world, all races, languages and religions together, and then to imagine the percentage of all of those people who would pray regularly.   Most participants needed to stop, talk about the concept and clarify the situation, and only then offered their assessments.   Appendix E gives the complete responses in relation to this question.   In summary participants estimated that prayer was valued by between 30% - 90% of the world's population leading them to pray regularly (daily or weekly).   The estimate of 54.5% of the world population who were estimated to pray regularly (daily or weekly) was given as the average for the whole participant sample.   Approximately half of the participants thought there would be some people in the world who would never pray.   Two of the 60 participants estimated that 50% would never pray but the figure of 10% was the most common estimate for the percentage of the world who would never pray.   With the rise of the secular world view in contemporary culture (Hervieu-Leger, 2000), it was an unexpected finding that the participants in this study portrayed prayer to God as the norm.   However, the findings from this aspect of the interview can be related to the work of Hay and Nye (1998) who assert that childhood is a time of spiritual awareness before the influence of the secular materialism of adolescence.   There is a need for further study to contrast these findings with findings using adolescent subjects.   One participant in the study stated that in his opinion the 10% who didn't pray were "mostly teenagers…more interested in other stuff…couldn't be bothered" (I.S. B3).

How do people learn to pray?

The question "How do people learn to pray?" was often interpreted by the participants as "How I learnt to pray".   For the Jewish and Muslim participants the immediate family, worship centre and school were all in agreement regarding the importance of prayer and these together formed a unified learning environment.   Some of these participants could not imagine a time when they would not pray.   There was a similar sense of unity for the participants in the Christian school and to a lesser extent in the Catholic school.   The participants in the independent and government schools recognised other aspects of influence as valuable.   The extended family: grandmothers, grandfathers, aunties, cousins, were all mentioned as modeling and teaching prayer. Many participants from these schools claimed that prayer just came from "within" like and "instinct" or "from the back of my head", a mysterious kind of knowing.   For others the influence of the media was significant.   The TV program *The Simpsons* was mentioned by six participants as giving ideas about prayer.   Films such as *The Sound of Music* and *Sister Act* were also mentioned by participants as part of their learning.   It seemed in the absence of formal teaching about God or the sacred, as Ulanov (1982) states, prayer still emerges out of the "life" and "desire" of the child (p. 14).   This is similar to the image of the importance of prayer for children in the work of Godin (1968). It could also be linked to the Object Relations Theory of each child having his/her image of God as a personal reality (Rizzuto, 1979; St. Clair, 1994).   The relationship between prayer and education is discussed further in chapter six of this thesis.

Has there ever been a time for you when prayer was important or powerful?

Personal stories about the participants' experiences of prayer formed part of almost every interview.   For the participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools, most important moments in prayer were associated with the communal celebrations in the tradition.   In these school groups, 65% recognised that moments in prayer were associated with communal festivals and worship, 20% were associated with times of illness and 15% with personal happy occasions.   For the participants in the Catholic, Christian, government and independent schools, important or powerful moments in prayer were largely related to times of grief or personal difficulty.   In these school groups 79% of participants remembered a time of illness, disaster, difficulty or death,

11% remembered a personal happy occasion, 10% remembered a time in Church (wedding , funeral, rite of reconciliation and Bali bombing [3]), and one participant in this group did not have a memorable moment of prayer.

The complete listing of these experiences in prayer is recorded in Appendix E.   It appeared that the meaning and valuing of prayer for participants varied according to the faith traditions of their immediate school and home environment.   Reiterating those points made earlier in this chapter, the direct faith community and the family experience are probably most important.   When the school follows a strong faith tradition it will act as a multiplier and reenforcer of the faith of the family.

In conclusion, the interviews provided the greatest proportion of data for analysis in this study.   The discussions were experienced by the researcher as lively and varied, eliciting both traditional understandings of prayer and idiosyncratic thought.   The process of memoing in Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1998) organised the large quantity of data generated in the interviews.   The interview memos were compared with the illustration memos and unfinished sentence data, and moved around into patterns of agreement leading finally to the combined finding of category and properties.

Combined Findings in relation to the Meaning of Prayer

From the long flow of data which has been displayed in various stages of analysis (Table 4.1) the conclusion is a point of "saturation"(Glaser, 1992, 1998).   The final theory showing a dominant category and properties has not been forced but through systematic attention in cross checking and comparison allowed to "emerge" from the rich field of data.   Figure 4.7 shows the theory which has been "generated" (Glaser, 1992; Sarantakos, 1998) using the preceding figures from Tables 4.3- 4.8 and Figures 4.1- 4.6.

The study using the selected subjects from six different schooling systems links back to the literature reviewed in chapter two.   In summary six points of theory are proposed for ongoing discussion:

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[3] The Bali bombing refers to a terrorist attach on a night club in Bali on 12th October 2002 in which many Australian tourists were killed and injured www.news.com.au Pandora.nla.gov.au/col/c8200

Finding One- Prayer Means Connection or Communication with God

The research by Hay, Nye and Coles and Hart (Coles, 1990; Hart, 2003; Hay, 1998; Nye, 1996) has suggested that spirituality, the sense of connection with the inner self, with others, with the environment and with God, is an innate human characteristic. This study supports this proposal, as students from a variety of faith perspectives and family backgrounds report a common understanding of the meaning of prayer. Some students articulated the idea saying "Prayers come from within you" "You just know how to pray" "No one needs to teach you". For all of the participants, prayer was recognised as part of life or a way to respond to life.

The estimation of people who prayed world-wide on a regular basis was an aspect of data which had a direct bearing on the concept of connection with God. Between 30%- 90% of the world population were estimated to pray regularly (daily or weekly), with a large group of people estimated to pray irregularly. Only half of the participants considered that there were people in the world who never prayed, and these participants generally considered a low estimate of 10% in this category. The findings from the data of relationship with God through prayer, can be linked to recent research. Spirituality is considered an innate human capacity by Zohar and Marshall (2000) and Larsen (2000). They refer to the evolutionary formation of the brain as part of spirituality or awareness of "God". This is recognised through the research in neuro-physiology (White, 2003; Zohar and Mashall, 2000). In a similar way Hart (2003) considered the physical evidence from cognitive science as part of the evidence for the consideration of spirituality as an innate human characteristic. The development of the pre-frontal cortex of the brain is associated with spiritual "higher virtues, such as empathy and compassion" (Hart, 2003, p. 276). Other evidence for this position is offered by Pearce (2002) and Brown (2002)

Therefore it is suggested that this study supports the theory of Hay, Nye and Coles and Hart in regard to the existence of an innate human capacity of spirituality used to reach out in communication with God.

Finding Two - Prayer is Related to the Image of God

The participants coming from schools associated with a faith tradition showed prayer associated with the image of God of that faith tradition. The image of God as

holy and above the earth was reflected in participants from the Muslim school, while participants from the Christian school spoke of God in more familiar terms of saviour and friend.

The data from those participants who professed no religion, or no religious affiliation, are significant in that they identified the reality of prayer and the reality of the image of God.   As the first generation growing up without "God" in the formal sense of recognizing God as an agreed cultural assumption (Coupland, 1995), there was a sense of God still present.   This God was recognised as good, possessing attributes of healing, guidance and comfort.   This is supported in the literature of Object Relations Theory as outlined by Ulanov (1982), St Clair (1994) and Rizzuto (1979).   The image of God in this case is not determined by the teaching of the faith tradition but rather is viewed as a human psychic connection with the primary care giver which is later developed by faith traditions.   This concept relates to the psychological understanding of Ulanov (1982) that prayer can be viewed as part of relational living, a primary human call to "the Other".   The continuing image of God also relates to the emergence of Australian spirituality within the pluralistic culture which has been proposed by Tacey (2000; Tacey, 2003), Rossiter (1999) and Mackay (1999).   This has been discussed in chapter two of this thesis.

Finding Three - Prayer Continues Within the Secular Environment
The theory of the meaning of prayer which has emerged from the data is displayed within the secular context of contemporary Australian life.   Bouma (2002) discussed the rise in secularisation in Australian society and the impact of immigration in terms of religious diversity.   These demographic realities can be compared with the writing of Hervieu- Leger (2000) who sees the constant intermingling of the need for continuity in the traditions and the need for change in the wider culture.   As the participants considered the common expression "Oh my God!" they were involved in this process.   This expression is part of the secular environment, seen on television and films usually in situations far removed from experiences of the faith tradition.   In the case of the exclamation of "Oh my God!" the reality of the secular culture comes into tension with the reality of the religious faith culture.   The attention participants gave to the "Oh

my God!" expression and how it related to the meaning of prayer could be considered an indication of the capacity to hold the ideas of the tradition and the modern secular context together. Many participants regarded the possibility of the "Oh my God!" expression to be a prayer if the person who utters the expression has appropriate feelings of fear or need.

Finding Four -The Meaning of Prayer is an Inner Aspect of Life Related to Feelings and Hopes

The data from individual participants show that personal feelings and hopes are expressed as part of the meaning of prayer. For all participants, prayer was regarded as an activity where aspects of personal life could be included. Expressions of need and gratitude were the common elements found in confession of sins, personal prayers about problems and illness, intercessory prayer, respect for God and thanksgiving. Within the communal experiences of prayer, opportunity was recognised for the participant's personal prayers to be offered. Even though the participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools understood the need for a strict ritual, the words and actions were supplemented from the inner intention of the participant. This was stated in many ways and in various parts of the interview including the response to the question of "Oh my God!" as a form of prayer. The data indicate that prayer, as an inner aspect of personal life, can be associated with the expression of the deep feelings and yearnings of the human spirit as portrayed by Ulanov (1982) and Twerski (2001). The findings from this study also relate positively with the literature linking spirituality and the emotional life. Spirituality is seen in the struggle to find meaning expressed by Zohar and Marshall (2000), in coping with the "dark night of the soul" by Hart (2003) and areas of sadness and pain by Pridmore (2003)

Finding Five - The Meaning of Prayer is Affected by the Environment

The data on the meaning of prayer show considerable differences between participants involved in the different schools. As mentioned above, this is a complex situation in that the school curriculum and pedagogy should be considered as only one factor alongside family teaching and other environmental forces. Within the limitations

of this study, it can be stated that the religious beliefs of the child's environment does have an effect on various aspects of prayer. Two examples can be seen in the amount of time spent in prayer, and in the type of prayer which is associated with the image of God who is the recipient of prayer. The literature from the different faith traditions presents some variation in the perception of the being of God, which influences the type of prayer offered. The image of God has variations within traditions and between traditions, showing a variety of images from transcendent and holy to accepting and immanent (Duffy, 2002; Rahner, 1958; Raji al Faruqi, 1992; Twerski, 2001).

It is beyond the scope of this study to investigate the religious education program in each of the schools but some tentative comments are in order. The observation notes (Appendix C) refer to the amount of religious education in each school and aspects of religious practice which were presented. For the Catholic, Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools, the school's prospectus states an intention to promote the particular faith tradition through the educational setting. This links to the discussion in chapter two of this thesis, which related to the theoretical approaches to teaching religious education. The government and independent schools do not have such a stated educational emphasis which would promote a faith tradition. As Rossiter stated, the study of religion is a controversial and sensitive aspect of our culture (Rossiter, 1984) and the ways in which religious education is presented are matters for ongoing discussion. It appears possible that the religious education programs in the different schools add to the differences in perception of the meaning of prayer. Further investigation into the differences in teaching content and styles would be an extension of this study.

Finding Six - Both Communal and Personal Elements are involved in the Meaning of Prayer

In chapter two, Figures 2.3 and 2.4 outline some of the similarities and some of the differences in the practice of prayer between the Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions. As can be seen from the data, the understanding of prayer expressed by the participants in the study, reflect many of these similarities and differences. The Jewish and Muslim practice involving posture, clothing, the importance of language and correct words were viewed as fundamentally important in prayer by the participants attending the

Jewish and Muslim schools. In this way the literature reviewed and the data collected were in agreement.

The literature reviewed relating to the Christian expression of prayer did not provide a sufficient framework against which to measure some of the common responses from the Christian, Catholic, government and independent school participants. The ritual of kneeling and placing hands with the palms together was not a feature of the Christian literature reviewed, but it was a definite pattern in the experience of many of the participants from schools with a Christian or secular orientation.

The literature from the Christian tradition provided a suitable context for the appreciation of the personal aspects of prayer reported by the subjects. Rahner's image (1958) of prayer from the heart, with longing and striving and Foster's image (1992) of prayer as honesty like a home-coming are closely related to many student responses.

Finding Seven - Ritual and Symbol are part of the Meaning of Prayer

All of the subjects, both those exposed to traditional teachings and those receiving minimal formal teaching all valued the use of some symbol or ritual as part of the understanding of prayer. The illustrations completed by each participant demonstrated the use of special posture as part of the meaning of prayer. There was a great variety of symbols presented by the participants from closing of the eyes, to the complexity of the Muslim Racha (prayer pattern). Although this outcome of the study was not related to the literature originally reviewed, it could well be associated with the work of Polanyi (1975) and Ricoeur (1995) who considered use of symbol and metaphor as necessary vehicles for understanding and expressing the deep and complex aspects of human life. This understanding is extended in the work of Ricoeur (1995) where symbol and imagination in the area of religion are considered part of the process of human identity formation. In the interviews most participants considered prayer as a mysterious, deep and personal experience and therefore communicating in prayer was often considered to be beyond the use of words. The actions of kneeling, eyes shut, ritual washing, movements, tones of voice, making the sign of the cross, speaking in tongues, raising the arms, laying on of hands, saying the special ancient words were all expressed as contributing to the meaning and reality of prayer.

Conclusion

The findings from the selected participants of this study display that prayer does have meaning and significance for children in contemporary Australian life. Prayer is viewed both as a personal activity and experience as well as a communal activity. Learning within the faith community has been shown to have some influence on the ways in which prayer is conducted and in relation to the image of God to whom the prayer is directed.

The meaning of prayer as "Communication with the good God" was found to be common amongst participants. Communication is viewed both as a form of social connection and as a personal expression. The image of the good God can be developed through traditional teaching in the faith community and through idiosyncratic thought.

In the following chapter the function of prayer is considered, and is a natural extension of the present chapter as meaning and function inter relate. The function of prayer is discussed in the context of established research and theory. The theory of the meaning and function of prayer generated by the present study will be demonstrated to extend established research and theory.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE FUNCTION OF PRAYER - FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Introduction

This study has two basic aims, these being, the investigation of the meaning and investigation of the function of prayer for the selected participants.   Chapter four presented the findings and discussion of the meaning of prayer and this chapter presents the findings and discussion related to the function of prayer.   The previous chapter used the three forms of data collected, illustration, discussion and the sentence exercise, to identify the meaning of prayer for participants.   This chapter will use the same forms of triangulated data and the method of analysis will follow a similar pattern.

The analysis, using the constant comparison method of Grounded Theory was conducted on four levels.   The first level of analysis was the preliminary analysis where the three different forms of raw data were collected and summarised.   The second level of analysis displayed the individual participant's representation of "category" and "properties" emerging from the three data sources.   The terms "category" and "properties" are used specifically in relation to Grounded Theory by Glaser and Strauss (1967).   "Category" refers to a dominant organizing idea, "a conceptual element of theory" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 36) which the researcher identifies from the data. "Properties" refer to characteristics which give significant extension to the understanding of the category.   The third level of analysis displayed a unified and refined Figure, representing the category and properties for each school group emerging from the combination of data from individual participants.   Finally, the fourth level displayed a composite theory emerging from all of the data, set out in diagrammatic form showing category and properties of the function of prayer for the total group of participants. Table 5.1 outlines the four forms of analysis.

Table 5.1 :
Sequence of analysis using Grounded Theory - the function of prayer

	Levels of analysis	Outcomes
1	Organisation and preliminary analysis of raw data:	
	Illustrations……………………………………..	Table 4.2
	Videoed interview ………………………… .	memos and working notes
	. .	Appendix eight
	Sentence completion ……………………… .	
	. .	
	"People pray…"	
	"I feel most prayerful when…"	
2	Synthesis of data for each participant	Category and Properties for each individual participant- Tables 5.2-5.7
3	Synthesis of findings for each school	Category and Properties for each school– Figures 5.1-5.6
4	Synthesis of findings – the emergent theory of the function of prayer	Category and Properties for the total study – Figure 5.7

In the identification of the function of prayer for participants, this chapter will follow a similar format to chapter four.   The different levels of analysis emerging from the data regarding the function of prayer will be displayed in tables and figures in Part One.   The discussion of the findings in relations to the literature reviewed will be presented in Part Two.

The use of the term "function" as stated in chapter one, refers to the "action or activity proper to a . . . thing" related to the "performance of some operation or duty" (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 724).   Through this definition, function can be understood in a social context, that is, as a way to connect with others or becoming part of a group for mutual reinforcement of belief.   There is also a psychological function or role of prayer in the inner life of the individual, such as, articulating a relationship with God or asking for help.   As the question of the meaning of prayer was related to the question "What is prayer?", so the question of the function of prayer was related to the

question "Why do people pray?"   As has been noted earlier in this thesis the aspects of meaning and function are interrelated.

Part One - Findings through the data analysis

Triangulation

The Illustrations

The illustrations (Table 4.2) are relevant to this section in that they demonstrate that prayer is recognised as a human activity.   Both male and female figures were shown in the illustrations in various physical positions of prayer.   Some of the figures demonstrated the required posture and demeanor of prayer belonging to a particular faith tradition.   An example of this was displayed in the dress and solemn demeanor shown in the participants' drawings from the Islamic school.   Some illustrations showed other aspects of the faith tradition, such as the prayer book in the Jewish tradition or the kneeling posture from the Christian tradition.   The total collection of illustrations (Appendix D) demonstrated some traditional understanding regarding prayer but also a wide diversity of appearance and posture.

From Table 4.2 it can be seen that 87% of the illustrations of people praying were drawn by the participants with facial features.   Of those illustrations with facial features 56% have smiling expressions, others have solemn expressions or have their mouths open.   These features of the illustration were considered in association with the data from the unfinished sentence exercise and the content of the interview and will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.   The features of the illustrations are noted at this stage, and will be discussed in a following section.

Interviews

The observations and findings for the interviews outlined in chapter four are relevant to this chapter as well.   As stated in the previous chapter, sensitivity to the behavioural indicators from the video data enabled the researcher to identify quotations from participants which expressed a significant level of involvement with the topic. These non-verbal expressions of involvement, outlined in chapter four, have been

verified by independent academic colleagues.   When reviewing the video data, it was observed that some questions in the interview elicited significant levels of involvement from the subjects.   The estimation of the number of people in the world who pray (see chapter three) was considered to be valuable in this regard.   This question encouraged the participants to imagine the whole world of people of different religions and nationalities and then estimate the proportion who would pray regularly, once a day or every week.   The attention of the participant was then directed to these praying people of the world asking the question "Why do they pray so much?"   In an objective way, this question invited participants to consider the function of prayer for many people in different situations.   Another question led to the identification of those who wouldn't pray and this also provided data in relation to the topic of the function of prayer.   These responses will be considered further in the Part Two of this chapter.

When analysing the video data to determine the meaning of prayer, it was relatively simple to identify a single category with attendant properties for each participant.   However the analysis for the function of prayer was more complex and multiple findings of category emerged.   Many participants responded to the question of why people pray with varied reasons, such as, "they do it with their family", "they are frightened", "they need help", "they want to say thank you to God" or "they feel sorry for something they have done wrong".   As can be seen from the analysed data in Tables 5.4-5.8, the function of prayer was considered to exist in several different ways such as showing appreciation, expressing need and joining with the faith community.   As the analysis proceeded, the researcher decided, through the frequency and weight of data, which aspects of the participants' understanding were dominant in determining a category.   In most cases the category chosen encompasses diverse aspects of understanding.   An example of this is the category for the participant CS B1 "Prayer functions as a personal and communal way to express feelings".   The definition of "category" for this participant involved a synthesis of three aspects of understanding. The participant valued prayer in response to difficult feelings; he expressed the importance of being in a community where prayer was practised as well as having his own private prayer.   The process of determining a category is discussed further in a later section of this chapter.

Unfinished Sentence Exercise

The raw data from the sentence exercise have been collated in Appendix H. As stated in the previous chapter, this part of the data collection was experienced to be a kind of test by many participants. There was a reduced amount of eye contact with the researcher, and a serious pondering of the appropriate words, which was observed by the researcher and the rater reliability colleague. This aspect of the data is considered as only partial, and is held in tension with the data from the interview and the illustration, to determine the final representation from each participant. The reliability of data collection in the triangulated form and the various colleagues involved in verification tests have been discussed in chapter three

Only certain sentence fragments were considered significant for the analysis of the function of prayer. Originally it was anticipated that sentence two "People pray because…"; sentence four' "I would pray…" and sentence six, "I feel most prayerful when…" would all provide useful data. However, during the interviews it was shown that sentence four was ambiguous for some participants. The participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools expressed difficulty deciding how to complete this sentence as prayer was not considered an option but rather a routine feature of their daily lives. Therefore praying was not shown as arising from a personal desire. Answers to this question were given such as, "I would pray… "five times a day", "to Allah", "in the Synagogue", "because it is part of my religion". "in the morning, in the afternoon and at night". Some useful discussion was generated through this ambiguous question regarding the "when" or "where" or "how" as well as the "because" of personal prayer. However, as sentence four generated concepts that were not easy to compare across school groups it has not been included in Appendix H. Sentence two, "People pray because…" and sentence six, "I feel most prayerful when…" have been recorded in the appendix to demonstrate the participants' understanding of the function of prayer from this source of data. Using these two sentences, an objective and a subjective response have been given by the participants.

In order to analyse the raw data in Appendix H, a coding system was devised which recognised the different functions of prayer identified through the responses of the

participants. These responses are presented in Tables 5.2 and 5.3. The responses in each category are presented as a percentage of the total number of responses for this group of participants. The analysis identified seven categories which showed the function of prayer through the data. These are: saying sorry to God (Sorry), expressing feelings to God (Feeling), finding a sense of connection with God (Connection), giving thanks to God (Thanks), Asking for something (Asking), recognizing the community as part of personal identity (Community), a way to heaven (After Life).

Table 5.2 :
"People pray because…"- percentage of responses by school group

Categories of the function of prayer	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
Sorry	11%	5%		6%		
Feeling	16%	26%	25%	40%	5%	14%
Connection	28%	32%	16%	13%	28%	21%
Thanks	16%	5%		13%	11%	36%
Asking	28%	32%	58%	27%	28%	
Community					28%	14%
After Life						14%

Table 5.3 :
"I feel most prayerful when…" - percentage of responses by school group

Categories of the function of prayer	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
Sorry				10%		
Feeling	75%	29%	80%	70%	44%	36%
Connection					19%	7%
Thanks		14%		10%		7%
Asking		14%	20%			7%
Community	25%	43%		10%	38%	43%
After Life						

These two tables show a difference of perception and experience of the function of prayer, both between school groups and between the two forms of sentence structure. These differences are discussed in the second part of this chapter.

The Sequence of Generating Theory

There were four levels of data analysis in this study.   Table 5.1 has displayed the process of analysis from the preliminary analysis and organisation of raw data through to the stage of individual representation, school group representation, and to the final theory for the total participant group.

The categories and properties in Tables 5.4-5.9 in many cases seem repetitive, but they indicate the variation in thinking and experience between participants in each school group.   In some cases the specific words of the participant are quoted and shown in parenthesis. Small differences in the choice of words display a particular aspect of understanding for the individual participant.   For example, in the Catholic school the total data for participant B1 have been recorded as the category "A personal way to find 'everyday' help through the faith tradition" (Table 5.4).   This participant appreciated prayer in a personal way for "everyday" problems such as doing homework, finding things that were lost, protecting his family and his dog and for times when he was feeling nervous.   This participant also used the "Hail Mary…" prayer; spent time "reflecting" on the life of Mary and acknowledged the value of the modeling of prayer in church. Therefore the category chosen for this participant encompassed both the personal emphasis of his prayer and the value of the faith tradition informing his prayer life.   The properties selected for this participant were: "Through hoping and thinking", "finding relaxation", "to protect others".   These properties came from the interview data as extensions of the category.   The first phrase amplifies his understanding of how the help comes through his prayers, and the latter two phrases summarise the everyday problems which he expressed as important aspects of the function of prayer.

The Catholic School - Analysis of Function stages two and three

The three forms of data from each participant were combined using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992) to determine a "category" and the associated ideas as "properties".   The Table below shows the responses from the individual participants with their code number related to the school group.

Table 5.4 :
Catholic school - Participants' responses

Participants' code	Category – Prayer functions as	Properties
G1	Personal and communal help in "getting over things"	In times of grief – for self and others A way to hope "God is there" Through the church community and ritual
G2	A personal way to deal with feelings	Sadness, illness, grief, being alone Happiness Fear of evil – war and disaster
G3	A personal link to the faith community, gaining help and giving thanks	When going through a personal 'storm' Using ritual to help others
G4	A communal link to the God who protects	For forgiveness and comfort – communal ritual Help for others "watch over" family
G5	A communal and personal way to ask and thank God	Hoping in times of personal need Gaining help for others
B1	A personal way to find "everyday" help through the faith tradition	Through hoping and thinking "To get relaxed" To "help the world" protect the family
B2	A personal link with the faith community bringing help and hope	Finding forgiveness and "reconciliation" In sickness, anxiety for self and family Thanks "part of God's family"
B3	A way to "get closer" to the God of the tradition, asking and thanking	Finding "spiritual" help, "on the inside" Thanksgiving for life and hope For others in illness, accident or anxiety
B4	A way to bring you "closer to God" through Jesus, to find help	Forgiveness, "relieving your sins" When angry or upset in social situations
B5	A link to God expressing praise and need for ourselves and others	In illness or anxiety For social justice – "power sharing" and poverty With thanks for our abilities and gifts

For all of the participants in this school, prayer was considered a good and useful part of life. The function of prayer was disclosed as a way of dealing with personal problems. Problems in dealing with the emotions of sadness, grief, anxiety and fear emerged as common themes through the interviews. Feeling 'closer to God' or finding

some kind of power through the prayer time was a common experience expressed by all of the participants.   Three participants mentioned the value of forgiveness in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as part of their personal link to the faith community.   This is the age when many children from this Christian tradition are given special instruction in preparation for taking part in the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

Prayer was also viewed as a way of finding comfort and hope in the face of difficult situations in the wider world.   This was seen to be important for eight of the ten participants.   Concern for the needs of others was demonstrated in situations of family illness or difficulty, friendship problems, national disaster, such as the Bali bombing (2002) and social justice.

From this group, four of the ten participants identified gratitude and praise to God as a function of prayer.   It was reported that thanks were given for the gift of life, material benefits, special experiences, aspects of the faith and the faith community.

Through the identification process outlined in chapter four, a selection of quotations chosen for their energy in expression add to the findings regarding the function of prayer for this participant group. (Prayer) "just helps you get over it" (G1). "My grandmother was in hospital . . . I prayed every day and she said it made her feel better . . . it helped . . . made me feel happy" (G3). (Prayer from) my feelings . . . my heart . . . to heaven" (G4).   "You can't hear his voice, but sometimes you can just sort of know He is doing something" (G5).   "Behind every bad thing there is always a good thing…keep praying" (B1). "If I need something . . . to help me . . . I pray to God and it usually does it (B2).   "(For) Jesus . . . prayer . . . important . . . He taught everyone to pray" (B3).   "Prayer helps people by relieving their sins . . . getting all of the bad stuff out of them" (B4).   "Prayer . . . keeps me going . . . I am tired because of hay fever . . . I wake at six every morning" (B5).

From the categories and properties emerging from the data of individual participants at this school a combined analysis is proposed in Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1 : Catholic School - Combined representation

CATEGORY- Prayer functions as -A personal way to enhance human life through spending time communicating with the God of the community.
PROPERTIES-

        ---Dealing with personal needs
           --guilt, grief, anger, anxiety, sadness, fear, illness
        ---Helping others in need
           --illness, protection, social justice
        ---Giving thanks to God the giver of life

The Christian School - Analysis of Function stages two and three

        The three forms of data from each participant were combined using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992) to determine a "category" and the associated ideas as "properties".   The table below shows the responses from the individual participants with their code number related to the school group.

Table 5.5 :
Christian school - Participants' responses

Participants' code	Category – Prayer functions as	Properties
G1	A way to express Christian commitment and gain help	In everyday problems - giving "courage" For those in sickness and poverty Gratitude for "becoming a Christian"
G2	A communal and personal way to gain help from God	In times of illness - self and others To "feel special" To "know God" through praise
G3	A link with "the Lord" to gain help	To become a Christian- self and others When there is "nobody else to ask" In danger or for healing
G4	A link between the self, family and community to God asking and thanking	For forgiveness In church - "praise" and "in tongues" For safety and healing Every day help– "just for life"
G5	A way to establish and maintain a personal relationship with the communal God who helps you and others	In church - "praise, worship" "miracles" In "tongues" - "makes you feel happy" To make life "heaps easier" To help the sick
B1	A way to show Christian commitment, gaining personal "peace" and "to bless others"	Praise in church or at home For protection - self and others In this life and the after life – "be more gentle and kind"
B2	A way to find personal and communal faith and "encouragement"	Through "praise" in church For those in illness, anxiety and danger "For relaxation and rest"
B3	A personal and communal way to care for the "inner spirit" through love and commitment to God in Jesus	Confession of sin - "let the bad out" Help in problems and decision making "Helps me know God is true"
B4	A personal and communal way to know God and gain help	Giving feelings of "relaxation" Trust in "God's plan" for the world In times of personal sadness- "feel God's in their heart"
B5	A personal and communal form of "worship" and trust towards God who helps	A way to "know Jesus", "grow in faith" "speaking in tongues" Help in illness and family "tough times"

The data from this group of participants showed a high level of similarity in certain areas regarding the function of prayer. One function, expressed in the interview

by all participants, was the communal aspect of prayer seen in 'praise and worship'. This function of prayer was explained in various ways by different participants. Some discussed the feeling of joy or relaxation in worship, while others commented on the outward signs of moving with hands raised or the group joining to pray with the 'laying on of hands'. Prayer taking place in a faith community was discussed at length by all participants. The concepts of "becoming a Christian" and "growing in faith" were associated with the communal worship for many participants.

The other area of agreement for all participants in this group related to the function of prayer as a way of gaining help in personal difficulties of life. Prayer was used at times of stress as a form of coping. As with the participants from the Catholic school, problem areas were largely concerned with management of negative emotional states such as, sadness, fear, guilt, loneliness and anxiety. The need for relaxation and courage were also identified by some participants in this group.

The function of prayer as a help for others was identified by six of the ten participants. However, in the video data most participants remarked on prayer for others who had special needs in the worshipping community. Prayers for others were directed by the desire for healing, the desire that others would become Christian, and some examples of wider prayers for people in danger or poverty.

A selection of quotations from this group of participants supports the findings: "Situation at school . . . hurt going around . . . (and I had) a sore throat at night . . . it would disturb my sleep . . . we kept praying about it . . . it's not so worse" (G1). "My auntie had breast cancer . . . now she's healed" (G2). "Mum was really sick . . . couldn't walk . . . bad arm . . . couldn't drive . . . I prayed to the Lord and He healed her" (G3). (speaking in tongues) "It's a language that only God understands . . . only some people can do it . . . words are weird . . . for some reason it makes you happy . . . like angels . . . I have heard my Nan" (G5). "You feel joyful inside" (B1). "Praying in groups . . . in a circle holding hands" (B2). "After a while of talking to Jesus . . . get everything bad out of your brain . . . then Jesus can talk to you" (B3). "When my dog ran away . . . I felt sad . . . prayed in my heart . . . two days . . . I prayed to God . . . then he came back" (B4). "Mum and Dad . . . when they have fights . . . they threaten they will break up and stuff . . . I pray that they won't break up . . . they will stay together and forget about the fight . . .

once as soon as I had finished praying they stopped fighting . . . the other times it took a day for Mum to come back" (B5).

Using the method of constant comparison of the data from the method of Grounded Theory a combined representation for the participants at this school is identified in Figure 5.2

Figure 5.2 : Christian School - Combined representation

CATEGORY- Prayer functions as- A way to express and develop Christian commitment and gain help for the self and others.

PROPERTIES-
---Communal praise and worship
---Help in personal problems
      --Illness, fear, loneliness, uncertainty, guilt, sadness, tiredness
---Help for others
---Illness in the family and the faith community, to find faith, those in danger or poverty

The Government School - Analysis of Function stages two and three

The three forms of data from each participant were combined using the method of Grounded Theory to determine a "category" and the associated ideas as "properties". The table below shows the responses from the individual participants with their code number related to the school group.

Table 5.6 :
Government school - Participants' responses

Participants' codes	Category – Prayer functions as	Properties
G1	A personal way to hope and trust in the God of my father to find help	Ideas of heaven give courage "Talking through" bad experiences Expressing needs in illness and grief
G2	A personal way to show belief in God with appreciation and expression of need	Appreciation for food and people Help in sickness and decision making
G3	A personal way to find help in trouble and express gratitude	When "scared, lost or alone" In sadness and grief In social disaster - "twin towers"
G4	A personal and communal way to find help and express appreciation	General help when angry or sad To become a "better person" In disaster- illness, hospitalisation, war
G5	A personal and communal way to gain hope	In personal need-grief and "hard times" To gain help for others - war, poverty
B1	A way to gain belief in God and practical help	Belief in God pleases God and leads to heaven Help in sadness, exams and difficulties
B2	A human call to God asking for help	In extreme circumstances- war, illness For general family help - health, long life, protection, "a good will", "forgiveness"
B3	A personal way to find help in difficult situations through religious systems	In personal sickness, decision making For others in extreme situations - "war, slavery, poverty"
B4	A personal and communal way to ask for help from God	Confession of sins, help to "be better" Possibility of help with illness, exams, grief and at the time of death
B5	A link with the faith tradition expressing gratitude and to gain help from God	Forgiveness and joy at Christmas When sad or lonely Communication with the dead

Four participants from this group displayed some awareness of the communal aspect of prayer as experienced in Church, but the data show these were short references. For all of the participants, the major time in the interviews was given to discussion about the function of prayer as a way to gain personal or individual help.   This could again be identified as a coping mechanism in times of stress.   The needs expressed in prayer were identified largely as those associated with difficult emotional states of fear, sadness, grief, anger and guilt.   General confidence in life was another need as two participants

considered that people prayed to gain a sense of hope for living and two considered prayer as giving hope of heaven. Three participants identified prayer as a desire to live a 'better' life.

When compared with the Catholic and Christian schools, the data from this group had a lower number of references to the function of prayer as helping others. The needs of people involved in war and poverty were expressed by three participants. These three participants and one other mentioned prayer as helpful in times of illness and grief in family situations.

The understanding of praise and thanksgiving also received less attention in the interviews from this group of participants. Gratitude was identified as a function of prayer by four participants who mentioned the joy of Christmas, people, food, the gift of life and birthdays.

Some quotations from this group of participants give a further understanding of the data. "One day it will all come true . . . one day you will be so glad" (G1). "A lot of bad things happen… (when they pray) feels like they are not alone" (G3). "Feel better in their life . . . from inside your head' (G4). (In prayer people) "believe that something can happen . . . even though things are bad" (G5). (I was) "baptised to get rid of sins" (B2) "People with an easier life don't pray as much" (B3). "You never know any day you could die" (B4). "Sometimes when I pray . . . to my Pa . . . I feel as though he is listening and feel better all round" (B5)

The findings from the first analysis of individuals at the government school were combined to identify a common category for all of the participants in this school group. The combined analysis of category and properties are displayed in *Figure 5.3*.

Figure 5.3 : Government School - Combined representation

The function of prayer
CATEGORY- A way to find help and express belief through communication with God
PROPERTIES-   ---Personal help
                                   --hope for life and hope of heaven
                                   --to be a better person
                                   --with difficult feelings
                                               - fear, loneliness, sadness, grief, anger, guilt
                         ---Help for others
                                   --illness, war, danger, poverty
                         ---Thanksgiving for food, life, people, birthdays and Christmas.

The Independent School - Analysis of Function stages two and three

The three forms of data from each participant were combined using the method of Grounded Theory to determine a "category" and the associated ideas as "properties". Table 5.7 shows the responses from the individual participants with their code numbers related to the school group.

Table 5.7 :
Independent school - Participants' responses

Participants' codes	Category – Prayer functions as	Properties
G1	A personal and communal expression of needs and feelings to God in faith	Personal difficulties - grief, anger, sadness Communal occasions - wedding, funeral Saying "thank you" Saying "sorry"
G2	A personal way to seek help when "in pain" or to express gratitude	In grief - giving connection with the afterlife At a time of "crisis" for self or a friend Expressing thanks for life and "truths"
G3	A way to express hope and gain help from God	When "really sad"
G4	A personal and communal way to gain help and give thanks	Help in sickness, death, war, grief for self, family and friends Giving thanks for healing and peace For "a happier life when you die"
G5	A way to seek help and favor from God	"To keep off evil spirits" "get good luck" In times of national emergency To avert God's anger
B1	A personal way to make "something set right" through belief in God	When "upset" "in trouble" grieving As an apology To express thanks to God
B2	A personal and communal way to "express their feelings" to God	In extreme circumstances - war, poverty Giving thanks for "food", family, Christmas and Easter
B3	A personal way to find "encouragement" through religion	When afraid, sad, angry, hurt or in trouble "Enjoy praying"
B4	A personal way to gain help and express belief and thanks to God	At times of serious illness for family or friends Thanks for "what we are", "what we are good at", "what we've got"
B5	Personal and communal way to find help and give thanks	Personal help with feelings- sadness and fear Help for others - health "Part of religious life" - ritual and rules Expressing appreciation in happy times

As with the government school group, the data from participants at the independent school displayed a greater emphasis on the personal aspect of prayer rather than communal awareness. The prayer experience of the fortnightly chapel service of the school was mentioned by three of the ten participants. Two of these participants also mentioned Church as a place where prayer could be learned and one other participant from this group had been to Church for both a funeral and a wedding. Five of the participants recognised the different forms of prayer that could be associated with different religions found in Australia and in different parts of the world. These references to communal prayer occupied a small amount of time in the total interview, while the majority of the time was spent in discussion of prayer from a personal perspective.

The function of prayer as a way to gain personal help was expressed by all participants. Prayer was considered to function as a way to express the difficult emotions of fear, sadness, grief, guilt and anger. This reflects the understanding from the participant groups of the previous schools, showing prayer as a way to cope with difficulties. Two participants expressed the idea that prayer functioned as a way to get good luck, while another said that prayer acted to keep evil spirits away. One participant considered prayer as meeting a need for encouragement, and another spoke of the need for hope in the afterlife.

When considering the four school groups examined so far in this chapter, it can be seen that the functions of prayer as a way of giving thanks to God and as a way of gaining help for others were observed as a major characteristics for the first two schools. The data from the government school showed less agreement in these two areas of giving thanks and gaining help for others. In the independent school group a similar pattern is shown to the government school group. Four of the ten participants at this school identified the function of prayer as a way of gaining help for others. Those in need were considered as the sick, those in war situations or places of danger and disaster as in the Bali bombing. Four of the ten participants expressed the thought that the function of prayer was concerned with giving thanks to God.

The linking of the different understandings of the function of prayer with different schooling systems does not indicate a causal relationship. The observable realities in

different schools, such as, curriculum time given to religious education and practice of prayer, constitute only one factor influencing the understanding of participants.   Other influences such as beliefs in the family, cultural affiliation and socio-economic status play a part in the understanding of each participant.   However, with the Australian situation of independent fee-paying schools, there is often a connection with the faith orientation of these schools, and the faith of the parents who elect to send their children to such schools.   The evidence from the interviews supports the idea that when participants attend a school where religious education and worship activities are given a large time allocation, the participant's family supports the same belief structure.   In this way the influence of the school teaching is reinforced in the home situation.

One participant in this group expressed understandings that appeared to be outside of the norm.   The participant G5 was very hesitant during the interview.   Expressions such as "I don't know" or "Maybe" were recorded at least twenty times during the interview which only lasted twenty minutes (the shortest time recorded for any interview).   The function of prayer for this participant was identified as a way to get good luck, to keep off evil spirits and to please God so that punishment would be avoided.   Although one other participant in this group spoke of getting good luck from prayer and a similar idea of luck was expressed by one of the participants from the Jewish school, the participant IS G5 could be considered a special case.   When speaking of prayer the participant G5 said she had prayed, and understood that prayer was a common human activity, estimating that 50% of people world-wide prayed regularly, weekly or daily.   However, she also estimated that 50% of people world-wide would never pray and when considering the unfinished sentence exercise, she could not complete the sixth sentence, as she could not imagine a time when she would pray.   As the only participant who could not complete this sentence from the total sample of sixty, her case should be noted.

A selection of quotations from the participants in this school is given here: (Prayer) "Special at a wedding…God please look after these people we love" (G1). "Two years ago my dog Tessa got to be put down . . . I got down on my knees . . . beside my bed . . . and said 'please look after my dog' . . . helped me dry my tears . . . actually made me feel better" (G2).   "I would pray if I was really sad" (G3).   "Comes from

inside you and goes up . . . .into the clouds . . . God hears it and grants it if He thinks it is reasonable" (G4). "I'm not sure . . . I guess . . . not sure . . . think so" (G5). "If you've got a bad country you probably pray more . . . war and stuff . . . Afghanistan pray a lot . . . war . . . 75% go to church . . . except their church is bombed" (B2). "People pray for religious reasons . . . it encouraged them . . . puts up their confidence . . . they enjoy praying" (B3). "I prayed for my Mum when she got cancer . . . prayed every day and night" (B4). (Prayer gives) "joy maybe . . . might feel better . . . telling God about their feelings" (B5).

Using the raw data and the individual findings in Table 5.5 a composite category with properties was identified to represent the independent school group. The combined findings are presented in Figure 5.4

Figure 5.4 : Independent School - Combined representation

The function of prayer:
CATEGORY- Personal and communal expression of needs and feelings
PROPERTIES
        ---To gain personal help
           --In sickness, fear, anger, sadness, grief, guilt, hope for an afterlife
        ---To gain help for others
           --In sickness, war, national emergency
        ---To give thanks
           -- For happiness, life, truths, Christmas and Easter
(To avert God's anger)

The Jewish School - Analysis of Function stages two and three

The three forms of data from each participant were combined using the method of Grounded Theory to determine a "category" and the associated ideas as "properties". Table 5.8 shows the responses from the individual participants with their code number related to the school group.

Table 5.8 :
Jewish school - Participants' responses

Participants' codes	Category – Prayer functions as	Properties
G1	A communal connection to the God of the tradition to seek help and give thanks	For health and material well-being - self and others For forgiveness Showing respect and gratitude Gender/role definition
G2	A way to find social identity and confidence being "next to God" and to give thanks	"Quietly by myself, good feeling" To thank "our God"
G3	A way to find "spiritual meaning" in life, personal "contentment" and social belonging through God	Showing respect and praise to God Renewing the ancient commitment to be God's special people Feeling "closer to God", "a lot better about myself"' Part of the gender/authority debate
G4	A communal activity which gives good feelings	As part of the family and Synagogue Feeling "closer to God" - relaxed Expressing appreciation Gender/role definition
G5	A communal activity expressing feelings to God	"Prayer is part of being happy" "Saying sorry" and giving thanks Expressing needs - health and material
B1	A personal and Jewish way to give praise and find help from God	In extreme circumstances - war Connection with the family and the past Connection with God – "feel better"
B2	A personal and communal "right thing" to do, thanking and asking	In illness or anxiety –self and others Thank you "my God" Connected with the judgment of God
B3	A "right thing" to do as part of the faith community giving "connection" to God, help and strength for self and others	Coping with the "crazy world" – wars, pollution Help for others, family and friends Connected with judgment and after life
B4	A personal way to express gratitude "in the Jewish religion" and ask for "blessing"	An expression of feelings and intention Gratitude - "God creates everything" To gain help for others- "healing, hope, good rain, survival"
B5	A helpful "Contact with God" through respect and praise in the Jewish tradition	"saying sorry" "Make peace in the world" Coping with feelings "calm me down" Gaining health

The data analysed through constant comparison for this group of participants displayed a consistent understanding of the value of communal prayer from the Jewish tradition. The common theme from each participant in this group was the understanding of the function of prayer as thanksgiving. For most participants this showed itself in a recognition of being Jewish, having an identity associated with God set in the history of the Jewish race. Some participants expressed this as "knowing who you are . . . good feeling . . . next to God" (G2), "spiritual meaning . . . contentment" (G3) "this is my God . . . I love Him . . . He is the only one" (B1), our "own religion" (B3). All of the participants told stories from the tradition associated with prayer with many references to the communal celebrations. The video data show that this group of participants extended the time set for the interview because they wanted to explain their understanding and the complex detail of the prayer ritual. For the interviewer, the usual experience in the interview situation was that after a period of about 30 minutes there was an unspoken sense of agreement that the time was over, the questions had been covered. However many of the interviews in the Jewish school group were terminated by the interviewer after 40 minutes while the participant was willing to extend the time further.

Second to the aspect of praise and thanksgiving, prayer was understood by this group to function as a way to find personal help. Seven of the ten participants identified prayer as a way to ask for personal courage, peace or blessing in the present life situation. The function of prayer in seeking forgiveness was related to the annual festival of Yom Kippur which was explained by five of the participants.

During the interviews five participants expressed the understanding of the function of prayer as a way to gain help for others. When analysing the data some aspects were unclear as aspects of intercession were combined with personal requests. From the data, concern was expressed for good health, peace, hope, survival, care of the environment and rain.

A selection of quotations from the participants is provided as part of the findings from this section. "Boys and girls pray separate . . . some things are different to say for a girl . . . most of it's the same . . . kind of for everyone" (G1). "I feel most prayerful when I do it quietly to myself . . . it gives me a good feeling, thinking that you are really

next to God . . . talking to Him" (G2). (People pray because) "it gives them special meaning . . . emotional meaning and contentment" (G3). "In the morning when we pray . . . barely anyone is praying . . . it's kind of forced . . . but when you get older . . . older people . . . take it seriously" (G4). "It comes from back ages ago . . . people would give sacrifices . . . prayers are instead of sacrifices" (G5). "During the war situation I prayed every day" (in addition to the communal prayer) (B1). "Say you know someone in my family who is sick . . . you just think of them in your head and still say it (prayers) for everyone" (B2). "He gets big weighing scales . . . all your sins . . . all your 'Masa Tova' (good deeds- prayers) (B3). (Prayer) "comes from an awareness of gratitude . . . words from way back and people make up in their own languages" (B4). "I love 'Simhat Torah'(annual celebration) . . . the men jumping and dancing after you finish reading the Torah" (B5).

The findings of the ten participants shown above in Table 5.6 were condensed into a category and properties for the whole school group.   The combined analysis for the Jewish school is displayed below in Figure 5.5.

Figure 5.5 : Jewish School - Combined representation

The function of prayer:
CATEGORY- A personal connection to the Jewish community expressing thanks to God and seeking help.

PROPERTIES-
        ---Offering respect and praise to God
          --For Jewish identity and meaning in relationship with God
        ---Asking for personal help
          --For health, forgiveness, material needs, peace and courage
        ---Asking help for others
          --For peace, hope, survival, healing and environmental care

The Muslim School - Analysis of Function stages two and three

The three forms of data from each participant were combined using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992) to determine a "category" and the associated ideas as "properties".   The table below shows the responses from the individual participants with their code number related to the school group.

Table 5.9 :
Muslim school - Participants' responses

Participants' codes	Category – Prayer functions as	Properties
G1	A way to gain personal help through "respect" for God in the faith community	To "get good deeds" and "forgiveness" To "please God" Gender/role definition
G2	A way to "glorify" and please God through the faith tradition in order to gain help from God	To remember the holiness of "the Lord" To thank God for "everything" "Get to heaven"
G3	A communal way to acknowledge the greatness of God to make life happier	To "get good deeds", "go to heaven" To "wish for what you want" Gender/role definition Communal festivals
G4	A communal way the thank and respect God to gain help	To become a good person For help with health and studies In gratitude for the whole "creation" Gender/role definition
G5	A communal way to show "obedience" and respect for God and ask for help	To go to heaven – be with God To be part of the Muslim community To gain help for exams or illness Gender/role definition
B1	A communal way to show respect, praise and commitment to God giving benefit	Help for the suffering and hungry Giving a personal "connection between you and a strong Lord" - "contentment"
B2	A way "to be part of their religion…so God will be happy with them" and help them	"Go to heaven…escape hell fires" To be part of the family community Help in family illness
B3	A way to gain help by showing obedience and respect for God through the faith community	"To go to heaven" "be purified" To remember God Gender/role definition
B4	A way to gain help through the worship of God in the Islamic community	"Get to heaven, meet God" Connection to the family
B5	A personal way to gain help for the self and others through the communal expression of respect and love for God	Go to heaven Showing belief in God Link with the joy of communal celebrations

The data from the interviews with participants in this group all showed an emphasis on the 'proper' way to pray as the Islamic way. The word "proper" was used by most of the participants in relation to prayer during the interviews. Much time was taken explaining the sequence of action, the meaning of the Arabic words and particularly for the female participants the 'proper' dress and ablutions. In this way it was apparent that the function of prayer was perceived as a way to link to the Islamic community, as all prayers were performed in a group either at school, in the family or Mosque. It was observed from the data that all of the participants in this group shared a common basic understanding of prayer as primarily communal. However, within the communal prayer most participants also expressed the need for a correct personal intention in worship and obedience to God's instruction.

A second common feature from the data in this group of participants was the understanding of prayer functioning as a way to 'get good deeds'. This expression was used by almost all participants and was linked to the understanding of God's judgment. Three of the participants explained in detail the concept of judgment associated with the books of "deeds" recorded for each individual by the angels. All participants expressed the concept of the need for "good deeds" as a way to go to heaven and prayer was part of this process. Two of the participants explained that the people who didn't pray did not have a true concept of heaven and thought this earth was heaven and therefore didn't bother to pray.

Pleasing God was associated in the data with paying due respect and praise to God. Giving praise to God was a central function of prayer and was mentioned by all of the participants in this group.

As well as prayer functioning as a way to heaven, the reward for prayer was expressed in terms of "contentment", "becoming a good person" and finding help in everyday situation such as exams or illness. Four participants spoke of this kind of personal, everyday assistance through prayer. In addition, two participants spoke of the function of prayer in relation to gaining help for others. Illness of family members was the primary concern expressed in the interviews.

Some quotations from the participants in the Muslim school group are given here: (I would pray) "because it is part of my religion . . . I know the rewards I would get . . .

this world is 'Doonya', temporary, and I want to get to heaven" (G1). "Prayer is important . . . in every religion it is different . . . in Islam prayer is communication to Allah and thanking Him" (G2). (People pray because) "to praise Allah . . . to get good deeds . . . the angels on your shoulder they write the deeds . . . right hand . . . left hand . . . at the judgment the books are weighed up". (G3) "Praising God . . . thanking God makes your life much easier" (G4). "If you really want something you ask for it . . . if you don't have . . . a family . . . or anything . . . you can ask for . . . if it is sensible" (G5). "Day of Judgment . . . He is majestic . . . on the throne" (B1). (I felt most prayerful) "when my grandfather was ill" (B2). "They want to go to heaven . . . they want God to be pleased with them" (B3). (I feel most prayerful) "When I get back from school . . . when I read the Q'ran . . . nearly every day, one page, with my Dad" (B4). (I feel most prayerful)"when it is Eide (end of Ramadan)…you go to the Mosque . . . like . . . your feelings go to you and . . . you have to pray" (B5).

The representations from the individual participants from this school were combined to display a comprehensive category and properties. This combined level of analysis of the data are shown in Figure 5.6.

Figure 5.6 : Muslim School - Combined representation

The function of prayer:
CATEGORY- A link with the Muslim community to show respect and obedience to God and find reward.
PROPERTIES---Connection to the faith community
                    --past and present
            ---To become good and go to heaven
            ---To give thanks and praise
            ---To find personal everyday help
                    --contentment, exams, illness
            ---To find help for others
                    --family

Synthesis

Before considering the final stage of analysis and the theory emerging from the total collection of data, there are some broad findings which could be of significance when considering the differences between the school groups of participants.

As mentioned in chapter four of this thesis, the data showed prayer as part of the awareness of gender differences. The Muslim female participants all expressed concern regarding the "proper" clothing, and ablutions necessary for prayer. Every member of this group mentioned the importance of correct clothing and they also spoke of their inability to join in prayer during the time of menstruation. These regulations of clothing and cleanliness were considered part of the function of prayer as paying due respect and praise to God in the Islamic tradition. In the Jewish school context, some understanding of gender difference was considered part of prayer. Three of the female participants from the Jewish school commented on the necessity for male leadership during prayer. The data from participants coming from the schools following a secular or Christian tradition did not have these same understandings of gender difference. It could be concluded from these examples that, to some extent, the function of prayer in particular faith traditions added to the understanding of gender difference in the faith community. This study involved limited discussion time with a limited number of participants, and it is suggested that the understanding of gender difference through prayer, requires greater investigation as this is a complex cultural phenomenon.

It is possible that gender difference could also be considered in relation to the incidence of prayer for others, demonstrated through the data from the different groups.

The table below (Table 5.10) gives a summary of expressions of concern for the well-being of others expressed by the participants according to school and gender group.

Table 5.10 :
Prayer for others - by school and gender

	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
Percentage who expressed prayer for others-Total	80%	80%	40%	60%	60%	40%
Male participants	80%	80%	40%	40%	100%	60%
Female participants	80%	80%	40%	80%	20%	20%

Another aspect of interest was the different understanding of praise and thanksgiving as a function of prayer.   From the identification of praise as a dominant category or property of the function of prayer for individual participants, a combined representation of the understanding of praise to God can be shown.   It should be noted that many aspects of life influence the expression of praise not just the religious education program of a particular school.   This will be discussed in the second part of this chapter.   Table 5.11 below shows the incidence of this function of prayer from the data according to school group.

Table 5.11 :
Praise and thanksgiving as a function of prayer by school group

	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
Praise and thanksgiving	50%	90%	40%	70%	90%	90%

Combined Findings

Using the method of constant comparison in Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992) the representations from the different school groups and the individual representation from participants a combined finding was determined.   This represents the emerging theory of the function of prayer for this group of participants. Figure 5.7, below displays the emerging theory of the function of prayer.   The choice of the words "perceive" and "respond to" represent the inner quality of prayer, that places life experiences into a context of broader meaning and provides a means to express some kind of response to

life experiences.   Both of these aspects are displayed in the data.   The four major properties of this category can be seen to vary across the participant group.   The function of prayer as a way to find help was common for all participants from all school groups. The help sought was of a personal nature and could be linked for many with an aspect of social identity.   Some participants understand the function of prayer as residing largely in the "social identity" afforded by the collective experience of prayer as part of a tradition.   However, for participants outside a communal faith tradition, the personal help was largely related to coping with difficult aspects of life and the resulting emotional states.   An extension of the help for the self could be discerned in the function of prayer as a help for others.   Help for family members and friends were the most common forms of understanding, but expression of empathy with victims of violence, injustice and poverty in the wider world community were also evident.   The aspect of praise for life has been shown to be part of the understanding of function of prayer for a majority of participants.

Figure 5.7 : The function of prayer is

CATEGORY A personal way to perceive and respond to the experiences of life
PROPERTIES ---Finding social identity through communal ritual, activity and belief

        ---Finding help through individual connection to God
            --In challenging emotional states of
            Anxiety, Loneliness, Fear, Anger, Guilt
          --Giving hope for the afterlife
          --In personal identity formation

        ---Finding help for others
          --Family and friends
          -- In extreme circumstances of social injustice

        ---Expressing praise and thanksgiving

Part Two - Discussion

Triangulation

The Illustrations

The details shown in the illustrations and the readiness to comply with the request for an illustration, suggested that the topic of prayer was a common aspect of life for the participants in this study.   Heller (1986) used illustration of the image of God for his study, and concluded that the way in which the participants drew detailed images indicated a substantial level of understanding and engagement with the subject.   For this study on prayer a similar conclusion is suggested.   Earlier in this thesis, Table 4.2 displayed the variety of aspects found in the illustrations.   In some groups there were strong associations of dress and posture linked to the acceptable forms of the faith traditions.   This demonstrated the function of forming or maintaining social identity and in many cases a religious identity for the participant.   The high incidence of facial expressions in the illustrations, indicated a personal involvement with the subject, and the high incidence of smiling faces similarly indicated a positive regard for the activity of prayer.   The particular portrayal of solemn faces in the illustrations drawn by participants from the Muslim school is an exception to the norm of the total group of illustrations. However, when considering the literature on the solemn responsibility of prayer in the Islamic tradition, this is an understandable feature. (Abul ala Maududi, 1982; Raji al Faruqi, 1992b).

Interview

One of the common responses from colleagues involved in rater reliability checking for this study (outlined in chapter three) was the comment regarding the level of engagement of the participants when speaking of their own experiences of prayer.   There was an agreed observation that participants valued prayer as something personally helpful in life.   The many stories offered voluntarily during the interviews demonstrated this personal involvement.   All participants had used prayer, and all but one considered prayer as an ongoing part of their lives.   Personal stories about the participant's experiences of prayer formed part of almost every interview.

In response to the question "Has there ever been a time for you when prayer was powerful or important?" differences in responses could be seen in relation to the faith tradition of the school to which the participant belonged. For the participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools, most important moments in prayer were associated with the communal celebrations in the tradition. Important moments in prayer were associated with communal festivals and worship by 65% of participants, 20% of participants remembered times of illness and 15% of participants linked these significant moments in prayer with personal happy occasions. For the participants in the Catholic, Christian, government and independent schools, important or powerful moments in prayer were largely related to times of grief or personal difficulty. One participant in this group did not have a memorable moment of prayer, but of the others 79% remembered a time of illness, disaster, difficulty or death, 11% remembered a personal happy occasion and 10% remembered a time in Church celebrating a wedding , a funeral, a rite of reconciliation or intercessory prayer. The personal coping function of prayer was most obvious in the group of participants coming from the Christian tradition and the secular tradition. The complete listing of these experiences in prayer is recorded in Appendix F. The literature on prayer from the Christian tradition (Foster, 1992; Rahner, 1958; Schaller, 1990; Ulanov and Ulanov, 1982) supports the understanding of the function of prayer as a way to cope with difficulties in life. It could also be said that the valuing of the communal function in prayer by participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools formed a similar function. Many participants from these two schools expressed the understanding that within the communal ritual there was a place where personal concerns and problems could be presented to God. This is in agreement with the literature of Wiesel (1996; 1996), Twerski (2001) Abdalati (1996) and Donin (1980). In the sentence completion exercise it was seen that the connection of prayer with the expression of personal feelings was the most prominent response shared across all groups regardless of the faith background. It was of similar importance to the appreciation of community connections through prayer shown by the participants from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions (Table 5.3).

Sentence Completion Exercise

As previously noted in the introduction to this chapter there were three possible sentence fragments concerned with eliciting the understanding of the function of prayer. Sentence two "People pray because…" was intended to elicit a nonthreatening objective response from the participants. sentence four "I would pray…" was intended to be more personal and the final sentence fragment "I feel most prayerful when…" was aimed to stimulate thinking about the most important function of prayer for the participant. As outlined earlier, sentence four was ambiguous and could not be considered as relevant to all participants. Therefore sentence two and sentence six generated the most useful data in relation to the function of prayer. The raw data from these sentences are recorded in Appendix H.

Tables 5.2 and 5.3 display the preliminary analysis through coding of the seven different functions of prayer shown in the data. The data from the sentence exercise can be seen to support many ideas expressed in the interviews. The emphasis on the function of prayer in relation to coping with affective states is the most the most prominent finding from these tables. Although sentence two, the more objective fragment, "People pray because…" elicited a considerable level of recognition of prayer as a way to cope with feelings, it was the personal sentence six, "I feel most prayerful when…" that elicited the strongest reaction. For sentence six, four of the six schools recorded the expression of feelings to God as the most important function. The other two school groups placed the expression of feelings second to the sense of community. The importance of community connection, which, for some, was articulated as a sense of identity, was a dominant factor in the understanding of participants from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools. This was noted in the response to sentence six, ("I feel most prayerful when…") but it is of interest that the more objective sentence, "People pray because…" did not elicit a similar high score.

The difference between the results for Table 5.2 and Table 5.3 could be related to the differences in emphasis between the religious teachings of the different faith traditions and the personal use of these teachings. Saying sorry as a function of prayer was recorded as 11% of the responses by participants in the Catholic school in Table 5.2. As noted earlier, students at this age level are being prepared for First Communion and

taking part for the first time in the Rite of Reconciliation, therefore ideas of confession and feeling sorry would be reinforced in the school program.   However this same category in Table 5.3 was not recognised as part of the most important personal form of prayer.   Giving thanks and praise was the most prominent response of 36% from participants in the Muslim school for Table 5.2.   However in the personal responses of Table 5.3, giving thanks accounted for only 7% of the responses from the same group.   Another example is the understanding of prayer as a connection with God as a teaching of the tradition with high scores in Table 5.2 but with lower scores for this category in Table 5.3.   It is possible that Table 5.2 collected more of the official understanding of the faith tradition which was familiar to the participant, while Table 5.3 illustrates the personal expression of the faith by the participant at this stage of life.

Combined Findings

The theory emerging (Figure 5.7) from this section of the analysis, shows the function of prayer as a personal way to perceive and respond to the experiences of life. It is recognised as a personal activity even though for many participants the social or communal context is of primary importance.   Prayer functions both as an internal cognitive and affective way to view life experiences, and as a more practical way of responding to uncontrollable states of environmental stress.   The finding of personal help through difficult emotional states is a common theme through all of the groups of participants.   The finding of identity and social connection is a common feature for the participants from the Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools.   The finding of help for others, family, friends and situations of concern in the wider world is another function expressed by many participants.   Finally the expression of praise and thanksgiving emerges from the data as a response to life.   From these combined findings on the function of prayer (Figure 5.7) five significant aspects of theory are proposed.

Finding One - Prayer Functions as a Personal Way to Perceive Life Experiences

The word "perceive" has been chosen in the final category emerging from the data, to represent the idea of prayer as a way in which life experiences can be understood,

processed or given cognitive meaning by the individual. The identification of the concept of personal perception is related to the finding of the expression of personal feeling as a function of prayer. From Table 5.3, the data from participants demonstrated the expression of feelings to God in prayer as the most common response. The feelings of joy and gratitude do form part of the data collected, but largely the participants identified the expression of difficult feelings such as grief, sadness, anger, fear and loneliness. A number of participants spoke of the value of prayer as a way to talk about the difficult things he or she couldn't tell anyone else. It is possible that prayer was of value as a safe way to express needs and difficulties. One participant said that prayer was like talking to a favorite toy (IS G2) another said in prayer you could "get all of the bad stuff out" (CS B4). This could be related to the understanding of the need to recognise and express human vulnerability and anxiety as part of the process of development (Kegan, 1982). It could also link with the ideas of Hederman (1999) and Moore (1992) where a relationship is shown between paying attention to the "shadow", that is the personal unacceptable attitudes and feelings that need to be recognised, in order to move through the difficult time. Ulanov (1986; 1982) also used the term "shadow" which is seen through life experiences as difficult forms of self-understanding and feeling which when acknowledged can lead to vitality and a new point of view. This concept is expressed in the words of Rahner (1958) "Once we have opened out hearts, we no longer seek to escape from ourselves". It is possible that the act of praying is a form of catharsis. Through prayer there is a safe place to express the strong feelings which are often considered socially inappropriate in other areas of life. From this acknowledgment that prayer provides a way to perceive or appraise life experience, prayer can be called a coping mechanism.

Finding Two - Prayer Acts as a Coping Mechanism

From the data above, prayer can be identified as a method of coping or moving through the strong emotional states of life. As stated by Lazarus and Lazarus (1994) the 15 recognisable human emotions are all attached to a personal pattern of meaning and belief. The emotions are grouped by Lazarus and Lazarus into different groups: the "nasty" emotions of anger, envy and jealousy, the existential emotions of anxiety fright,

guilt and shame, emotions from unfavorable life conditions of relief, hope, sadness and depression, emotions from favorable life conditions of happiness, pride, love and empathic emotions of gratitude, compassion and aesthetic awe.   The data show that prayer is used as a form of response to all of these emotional states.   As a way of coping with the "nasty" emotions there is the prayer of confession where "it's like telling someone we really trust" (GS G1) a way of "getting everything bad out of your head" (CS B3).

The most common use of personal prayer was found in the responses of participants who reported using prayer to appraise and examine unfavourable life conditions and existential emotions.   A few examples of this are: "People pray if they are upset, they want something set right or they are angry" (IS B1), "just talking to God helps you" CaS B2), "People with an easier life don't pray as much" (GS B3).   The emotions of favourable life experiences led to the prayers of thanksgiving and praise. The emotions of empathy were expressed as intercessory prayer or praise.   Although prayer could be used in a negative way as a denial, "a disavowal of reality" (Lazarus, 1994, p. 166) it seems from the data, that prayer acted as a positive "distancing" mechanism, through which the perceived negative situation could be reassessed. Pargament (1997) stated the positive possibility within prayer in the words "the religious world helps people face their personal limitations and go beyond themselves for solutions"(Pargament, 1997 p.86).   Pargament continues "the most central of all qualities of coping is possibility" (p.86).   The data from this study support this concept, the participants recognised prayer as a place where many different emotional states could be brought to God, whom they recognise as good.

The idea of God as good, as someone to be trusted, as the creator, the one who understands, the one who heals, and for some, the one who works miracles, is linked in the data to the understanding of prayer.   These positive images of God were present in the interview data in association with the many stories showing how prayer helped participants to get through the difficult feelings associated with experiences in life.   It is possible that the positive image of God in relationship with the participant through prayer, led to a new appraisal (Frydenberg, 1999; Lazarus, 1991) of the situation.   With God present there was a possibility that there could be something good within the

difficult feelings associated with the perceived negative life experience.   In this way the old pattern of stimulus leading to response is replaced by stimulus being affected by "organismic variables" before the response (Frydenberg, 1999).   Many forms of "organismic variables" are possible, leading to different levels of ability to cope with the negatively perceived stimulus.   Pargament (1997) and Resnic (1993) suggested that various religious activities act as forms of connectedness, enhancing the coping capacity of the individual when dealing with difficult life experiences.   The situation of connectedness is complex and polyvalent; it could refer to connection to the inner emotions of the self, connection to others through the faith community or connection to the transcendent image of God.

It seems likely that prayer acting as a link to the good, caring God, could be one way to reappraise the negative situation, looking with a different perspective at the good possibilities within the situation.   This links with the major understanding of Hay when he defines spirituality as "relational consciousness" (Hay, 1998, p.113).   In prayer there is awareness of a relationship with the transcendent, and a sense of connection which helps to reappraise the challenging experiences of human existence.   All of the sacred texts from the traditions involved in this study make reference to this aspect of faith in the God who is there and who cares for "His" human creatures (the Bible, Torah, and the Q'ran).   The participants made many references to this thinking pattern through the interviews.   Following are some examples: "behind every bad thing there is always a good thing . . . keep praying" (CS B1) "God has a plan . . . the cycle of life . . . God knows . . . in safe hands" (CaS B4)   "When I do it quietly to myself . . . it gives me a good feeling, thinking that you are really next to God . . . talking to Him" (JS G2)   "They pray because they think . . . I am a person, no one can take that privilege away from me . . . God is there to help me . . . to love me . . . He's a father" (IS G2)

The expression of feelings of guilt and regret are also evident from the data as part of the function of prayer.   Prayer is viewed as a way to move through these uncomfortable emotional states.   This has a link with the emphasis on the loving and accepting relationship as spirituality in the work of Hay (1998).   Within the religious traditions, various beliefs and communal rituals were mentioned by the participants that were associated with overcoming guilt through prayer.   The festival of Yom Kippur was

explained as a helpful time of prayer for the forgiveness of sins in the Jewish tradition (Donin, 1980). The act of Confession in the Sacrament of Reconciliation was mentioned in a similar way by many participants in the Christian tradition. The fact of sin and judgment were mentioned by almost all of the participants from the Muslim tradition. The act of prayer, in this case, was seen to mitigate the force of evil. Prayer was a "good deed" which would be counted on the Day of Judgment (Abul ala Maududi, 1982). Other participants not coming from a faith tradition also spoke of saying sorry in prayer. God was considered good and trustworthy, you could tell Him and he would keep a secret. Apologiszing to God was also considered an appropriate or respectful way to respond to God by some participants. Others expressed the idea that an expression of sorrow with an explanation of good intentions was a way of maintaining a relationship with the transcendent.

Finding Three - Prayer Functions as a Personal Way to Respond to Life Experiences

As an extension of the concept of prayer acting as a way to perceive and understand, prayer was understood by many participants also as a way to respond to life experiences. These were usually the uncontrollable experiences of life, the most common experiences expressed in the data related to issues of illness, death and separation. When a participant's mother had cancer prayer was used, when a pet dog died the participant prayed, when a participant was injured prayer helped. As one participant said, prayer was something to do when there was nothing else to do. This could be linked to the concept of prayer in Godin (1968), who claims that prayer can take both a "manipulative aim" and an "expressive aim". Many prayers from the participants had the manipulative aim of changing the circumstances of life, asking God to do something. This was shown through the many prayers requesting healing for family members or the prayers from CS B5 who asked God to prevent his parents from separating. However, other prayers were linked to the "expressive" aim of linking to God who could understand and in some ways share the experiences of life. One participant spoke of prayer that "keeps me going" (CS B5) through his struggle with asthma, or the prayers of JS B2 which take him through the gates of heaven to be close to

God. Another, when talking about "unanswered prayer", said that life "comes from God…we can't do anything about it…just praise to Allah" (MS G4).

The finding of prayer functioning as a way to cope with life experiences agrees with findings from the work of Coles (1990). He relates many visionary moments in prayer in the experiences of children in situations of uncontrollable stress through illness. Although Coles recognises some aspects of prayer relating to the religious environment in which the child was nurtured, there is a wider understanding of prayer as connecting to a "good God", an often idiosyncratically understood felt presence. Some differences are obvious from the data in this study which can be seen to relate to the faith environment of the participants, but the sense of connection with a "good" God has been shown in a majority of cases through the data, as a way of responding to difficult life experiences.

"You never know any day you might die" (GS B4) was expressed by one participant who had no family religious connection. This quotation was representative of many others in the interview data. Prayer was viewed as some form of link with the after-life. As noted previously, coping with death and grief were common themes in the function of prayer identified by the participants. As well as the participant coping with another person dying, coping with the thought of their own mortality was another function of prayer. As shown in the interview data, prayer was part of a relationship with God who was good and powerful, so the facing of death could be seen as possible when in this relationship. These findings are supported by the work of Hart (2003), who states that the existential questions of life can cause concern for children, and a spiritual approach is needed to counter fear. As has previously been noted, there was difference noted in relation to the amount of attention given to the after-life amongst the participants. For each school group there were one or two references to prayer helping to find a good state in the next life. However, the data from the participants belonging to the Muslim school showed that the participants in each interview made reference to the importance of prayer as a good deed which functions as a determiner of benefit in the after-life.

Berryman (1991) likens worship to play, part of imagination and wonder, and it is in this context that prayer, that talking to God takes place. Berryman's work is within the environment of the Christian faith tradition, but he sees the activity of prayer,

particularly silent prayer (Berryman, 1999) as an essential element of all faith traditions. The relational aspect of coming close to God in wonder and creative questioning by Berryman has a strong link to the findings from this study. Some of the quotations from participants amplify this concept. "It brings you closer to your God…a feeling of contentment" (MS B1) "with your problem… He (God) gives you a hint of how to fix it up" (IS G2), "Just tell him you love Him . . . you can say anything" (Ch SB3), "Believe that something can happen . . . even though things are bad (GS G5)

Finding Four - Prayer for Others Functions as a Response to Life

An extension of the concept of prayer as a response to the uncontrollable experiences of life can be associated with prayers for others. Many participants recognised the function of prayer as something to do when overwhelmed by the great needs of others. Prayers for family members and friends were the most common forms of prayer for others in situations of illness, grief and financial need. Communal prayer at the time of the Bali bombing was expressed in the interview by some participants as an important and helpful thing to do. Other communal intercessory prayer related salvation for others and world peace. Some participants spoke of the extreme needs of those experiencing war, injustice and hunger. All of the expressions of prayer for others could be viewed as an individual form of coping with the wider distress of life, a finding which is supported by the work of Lazarus (1994).

The function of prayer for others could also be considered as part of the relational consciousness defined in much of the literature on spirituality, such as by Hay (1998), Hart (2003), Coles (1990) Zohar and Marshall (2000). In prayer for others, participants expressed a sense of unity or emotional association with those who were in need. There was an awareness of connection, even though the ones for whom prayer was offered were not present, or sometimes not even known to the participants.

Finding Five - Prayer has a Community Building and Identity Formation Function

Prayer was shown through the data as a community activity in the majority of cases. As discussed earlier, many of the subjects from the independent and government

schools indicated that they had very little contact with any form of organised religious worship, and yet the concept of prayer as part of Church was a common understanding. For the participants from the Catholic, Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools, the experience of prayer within the worshipping community was expressed in all of the interviews. The data indicated that the participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools considered the communal aspect of prayer as the normal way to pray. The Jewish ritual was always conducted in Hebrew and the Muslim prayer ritual was always conducted in Arabic. The participants from these two schools expressed awareness that they were learning the language, and could only join in prayer to the degree in which the language was known. There was a common understanding that the prayers of children needed to be supplemented by the adult community as their grasp of the language was limited.

The data show that the place of the community in defining and endorsing prayer was most obvious in the data from the participants from the Jewish and the Muslim schools. Some participants from these groups were aware of other forms of prayer, but the family, school and worship centre combined to encourage the traditional rituals for the group. This did not mean that the prayer ritual was considered complete in itself, for individual prayer in the heart or in the mind and the proper intention were understood to be part of the formal ritual. This emphasis on community is supported by the work of Coles (1990) and Heller (1986) where dimensions of spiritual and religious understanding are tied to the community of faith in which the child is reared. This finding is also related to the work of Hay (1998) and Nye (1996) in recognizing the relational aspect of spirituality on the social level as part of the relationship with the transcendent.

Identity formation as a function of prayer was mentioned by some participants as part of the communal experience. "(When you pray) "You know who you are" was expressed by participant (JS G2). Other participants coming from schools with communal worship experiences also expressed the idea of belonging, "Being Jewish", "Being Muslim" or "Being Christian" were common expressions. This relates to the concept of connectedness and the value of social relationships within religious groups expressed by Pargament (1997) and Resnick et al (1993). The understanding of God as the good creator was evident from the data for a majority of participants. As prayers are

offered expressing needs and difficulties in life, there was an awareness of joining with others as one human family relating to the transcendent.   This intuitive, relational, mystical awareness in prayer has been amplified in the work of Elkind (1998) and Hart (2003).   As noted above, the idea of identity formation has been expressed through the data in a variety of ways "Sometimes when I pray to my Pa I feel as though he is listening and feel better all around" (GS B5), "Prayer is special at a wedding . . . please God look after these people we love" (IS G1) "I pray when I get back from school . . . I read the Q'ran nearly every day one page with my Dad" (S B4).

Finding Six - Expressing Praise and Thanksgiving is a Function of Prayer

Asking and thanking have been considered from the literature of the faith traditions as two aspects of the relationship with God expressed in prayer (Duquoe and Floristan, 1990; Phipps, 1996; Soares-Prabhu, 1990; Wiesel, 1996).   This understanding is reflected in Table 5.2 where giving thanks is expressed as a function of prayer. Thanksgiving and praise were mentioned by all participants coming from the schools of the Muslim and Christian traditions, with particular reference to the appreciation of the faith tradition.   The idea of Jesus' love and salvation were dominant aspects of praise amongst participants in the Christian school, while praise and thanksgiving were given to Allah in His high position as creator in the Islamic tradition.   These findings agree with the literature reviewed (Abdalati, 1996; Rahner, 1958).   However for a large number of participants from all school groups, thanksgiving formed a part of the concept of the function of prayer.   A selection of quotations shows the breadth of understanding "Rich people pray for . . . like thanks" (IS B2), "You feel joyful inside" (Ch S B1), "Like talking to one of your friends . . . just talking to God and Mary" (CS G5("I love Simhat Torah . . . the men dancing and singing" (JS B5) "Just thanks for the gift of life" (GC B5).

It is possible that the use of thanksgiving in prayer could be associated with the coping theory of Lazarus (Lazarus, 1991; Lazarus and Lazarus, 1994). As the God to whom prayers are addressed is recognised as the good giver of life, so the prayers in times of distress when addressed to this same God can be appraised more easily as having some good purpose or hidden meaning.   The thanksgiving function of prayer in this way

fits with the perception and response to life as a totality, and both good and seemingly bad experiences can be brought together in the prayer relationship with God. A connection is also possible with the work of Seligman (1991) who examines the various ways in which optimism can be learned. He states that the conscious remembering of positive images and past experiences can help to develop a positive expectation in present and future life experiences.

Other Possibilities from the Study-

Three further areas of ongoing discussion and possible research are noted. First is the issue of gender definition in the activity of prayer. This matter has been discussed in relation to the gender restrictions on prayer within the Orthodox Jewish and Muslim traditions. Further research needs to be undertaken to examine the relationship between moral development, the level of intercessory prayer and gender. The Table 5.10 indicate the possibility of a connection between education in faith, gender awareness and the development of empathy shown in the practice of intercessory prayer. The work of Gilligan (1982) would be relevant in regard to further research and discussion in this area. Moral development has been shown to exist in some form of relationship with spirituality (Coles, 1990; Hay, 1998) and further research in this field could be linked to aspects of the function of prayer and gender.

Two other issues relate to the function of prayer from observation or the implicit understanding of prayer as experienced by the participants. For participants from the Jewish and Muslim traditions, one of the functions of prayer could be identified as part of the learning of a foreign language. As Hebrew or Arabic is used exclusively as the language of prayer for these traditions, children are exposed to a second language through the activity of prayer. The other observation regarding the function of prayer relates to the learning of self control for children. The researcher observed Jewish, Muslim and Christian worship times and considered each of these as possibly providing the participants with a model of self control, encouraging quiet reflection. Further research in these areas could be beneficial to extend current knowledge about the experience of prayer for children.

Conclusion

This chapter has described the various stages in the process of data analysis in relation to the function of prayer for children in contemporary Australian life. The analysis process was shown to lead to the finding of the function of prayer as a personal way to perceive and respond to the experiences of life. The perceptions and responses were seen to operate through identification with the faith community and a personal understanding of connection with God. The function of prayer was seen to relate largely to the affective domain of life, in dealing with difficult emotional states associated with life experiences, and prayer was identified as a coping mechanism within uncontrollable stressors such as death or disaster. The positive emotions of praise and joy were also part of the response to life experiences which emerged from the data.

The discussion of these findings demonstrated links with the literature reviewed in chapter two of this thesis. Discussion focused on five aspects of theory relating to the function of prayer. Prayer functions as a personal way to perceive or make meaning of life experiences, and prayer functions as a way to respond to life experiences particularly the uncontrollable aspects causing personal distress. Prayer for others is an extension of the way an individual can respond to life experiences. Community building and identity formation can be identified as functions of prayer, and finally the expression of praise and thanksgiving are part of the function of prayer. Three less defined possibilities from the data are suggested in the final section of Part Two. Under some circumstances prayer could be considered to function as part of gender definition, as an aid to self control and as a means of learning language.

Using the findings from this chapter and chapter four, chapter six identifies the implications of this study for education. Education in the secular society will be considered in the light of these findings as well as educational guidelines for the study of religion through schools associated with faith traditions. This leads to the final chapter where the findings from Chapters four, five and six are placed together to discuss the final theory and recommendations.

CHAPTER SIX: EDUCATION IN PRAYER

Introduction

In the previous two chapters the meaning and function of prayer have been identified from the data and discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter three. The findings relate to children's experience of prayer in contemporary life as a personal and communal activity that can be a way of perceiving and responding to life.

One of the questions used during the interviews related to the participants' understanding of how prayer is learned. The response to this question has provided data which warrant further attention and discussion. Therefore, this chapter will examine the data which have emerged from the study linking prayer and education in relation to prayer. The term 'education' can be defined as "the act or process of . . . the imparting or acquisition of knowledge, skills etc." (*Macquarie Dictionary*, 1981, p. 575). In this chapter "education" is used in the broad sense of identifying what factors or instruments influence a particular attitude to prayer or behaviour in prayer. Education is therefore more than the formal activities taking place within the school environment, but can be identified in various aspects of living and experience.

Using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1992), the raw data gathered from the question on how people learn to pray, is organised into tables and these are compared with the participants' ideas from other parts of the interview. In this way, using all aspects of the data, a comprehensive analysis of the participants' understanding will be obtained.

The first part of this chapter presents the findings in relation to education and prayer. Tables 6.1-6.6 display the responses from the participants to the particular

question relating to how people learn to pray.   The responses from the participants are displayed in school groups, and these findings are then compared with further information from other aspects of the interview data.   The findings are combined into theoretical proposals making use of all the available data from this study.   The second part of the chapter discusses aspects of theory in relation to the relevant literature. Implications for formal education will be proposed as well as implications for less formal education in home and worship centre.

Part One - Findings

As stated in chapters four and five of this thesis, the grouping of findings according to school groups does not indicate a causal relationship.   The formal school curriculum in religious education and the school worship activities are considered to have some influence on the participants, but many other aspects of the environment are acknowledged as affecting perceptions about prayer.   The data show that different participants relate to the school instruction in different ways.   Family beliefs and differences in other aspects of socio-cultural background need to be recognised as contributing to learning about prayer and the experiences of prayer.   The observation notes in Appendix C show some of the differences between the schools in relation to the teaching and practice of prayer, such as the time given to instruction and the time given to collective experiences of prayer during the school program.

It can be assumed that when selecting a school for their children, a significant number of parents would choose one that they consider supports their beliefs, although this may not be the case for all parents.   For example, the government school system is officially secular in that no religious teaching is offered as part of the formal curriculum

by the departmental teachers; however, some families with strong faith orientations might send their children to a government school.   Similarly, the independent school provides some formal religious activities in the Christian tradition, but as can be identified in the data, many of the students who attend this school come from families having minimal association with a Christian faith community.   With this cautionary note, investigation of how participants perceived learning in prayer will proceed.

The responses to the question "How do people learn how to pray?" are displayed in the tables below.   The individual responses from participants are shown in their school group with a total number of responses for each source of learning at the base of each column.

The Catholic School

The question concerning how people learn to pray elicited the following responses from the participants in this school group.   Words given particular emphasis by the participants are shown in quotation marks.

Table 6.1 :
Catholic school responses - How do people learn to pray?

Participants' codes	School	Worship Centre	At home	Person	Media	Other
G1	X	Church		Mum /Dad		
G2	X	Church	X	Mum		
G3	X			Mum/Prep teacher		"just seeing how"
G4	X	Church		Kindergarten teacher School 'buddy' system'		
G5	X	Church				
B1			X	Especially Mum	The Simpsons	"From inside – a natural thing"

	X	Church				
B2	X	Church "in God's family"		From Saints		"From within you"
B3		Church		Mum/Jesus/ Priest		"Out of my own head"
B4	X	Church		Mum/Priest/ Jesus		
B5	X	Church		Mum and people in Church		"Taking the example"
Total	9	8	1	9	1	4

This sample gives the impression that Church, school and home, perhaps of equal influence, were acknowledged as the most common sources of learning about prayer. This is shown in the data naming Church and school, and in individuals who were identified as models or special teachers of prayer. The mother is recognised in seven of the ten cases in the data where an individual is cited as a source for learning about prayer. The second most commonly identified person of influence recognised in this regard is the priest or a teacher.

These data correspond to the data in the interviews where stories of the home, Church and school were shown to support prayer. Participants G3 and G4 spoke at length of special memories of prayer. The participant G3 remembered her mother praying for her when she was young and then learning to pray herself in the first year of school. Similarly G4 spoke of learning to pray in Kindergarten. The teacher took time to show her how to use her hands to make the Sign of the Cross. Many of the participants spoke of the importance of modeling, "just seeing how" (G2) "you see people do it and just do it" (B1) "watching people, taking the example" (B5). Three participants spoke of Jesus as the one who "was sent down, taught us how to pray" (B4).

In this group three participants explained that prayer was a natural thing, that does not need to be learnt, but rather just comes from within. Some examples were given of times when prayer seemed natural, as a sharing of feelings. When her dog died, participant G1 made up her own funeral service as "something to do…to help you get over things" it was a natural sort of thing like "saying goodbye". Participant B1 explained that prayers came from within your head or "from your nerves if you are nervous". Participant B3 found prayers coming from within when he was in bed at night "having trouble sleeping" or when being teased by other children.

The experience of communal worship was also significant as a time of learning to pray. When remembering a powerful moment of prayer, two participants remembered prayers in Church after the terrorist attack on the nightclub in Bali (2002); another remembered the death of her grandfather and another remembered conducting a funeral for her dog. Participant G1 explained the way she constructed a service for her dog starting with the words "we are gathered here today", she explained that this was a good way to do it because it was a way she had seen "somewhere . . . maybe in Church". The learning of ritual prayer such as the "Our Father" and "Hail Mary" were other examples of the prayer resources in Church.

In the sentence completion exercise, six of the ten participants mentioned prayer in Church associated with times when they felt "most prayerful". One subject spoke of being a "Catholic" as part of the reason why she prayed. These findings can be compared with the observation notes where the practice of communal prayer is a familiar and regular part of school life. In the school prospectus, the Catholic school advertises an aim of education in the Christian faith tradition. Considerable time is given to

classroom religious education, classroom prayers and weekly worship services in the adjoining Church building (Appendix C and Table 6.8).   Through the school program, the participants were encouraged to take part in extempore prayer in the class room. They were given the opportunity to lead in prayer during the weekly para-liturgy in the Church as well as to take part in the more formal liturgy held twice each terms as worship times which involved the teachers and families.   The observation material and the interview data demonstrate for this group, a significant relationship between learning to pray as part of the worshipping community of home, school and Church.

In summary, the participants from this school understood learning to pray from:

- Agreement between Church, school and home

- Following an example in communal prayer

- An experience with the mother

- The life of Jesus

- An inner source

The Christian School

The question concerning how people learn to pray elicited the following responses from the participants in this school group.   Words given particular emphasis by the participants are shown in quotation marks.

Table 6.2 :
Christian school responses - How do people learn to pray?

Participants' codes	School	Worship centre	At home	Person	Media	Other
G1		Church		My Mum		"Living in a Christian family"
G2	X	Church	X	Pastor		"Something in you, not taught"
G3				From my Mum		The Bible "Inspiration from

					the Lord"
G4	X	Church		Mum and Dad Teacher	
G5					"God tells you" "From inside" "From feelings for others"
B1		Church		Seeing other people	"Automatic, easy thing"
B2				Saw my parents	Vision of an angel
B3		Church		Parents/ Relatives	"Christian background"
B4			X		The Bible
B5					"Just started when I was three"
Total	2	5	2	7	9

The responses from these participants display an understanding of learning to pray associated with the family, within the context of the Christian faith community. However, individual initiative was also identified in relation to learning to pray. In the source of learning named "other", two of the ten participants recognised the influence of a Christian family, and others spoke of learning to pray from the Bible, but the largest response was related to prayer as coming from a direct relationship with God. Words like "inspiration" "just started", "from feelings for others", "something in you" were used to convey learning to pray as a form of personal experience. The responses from Table 6.2, above can be related to the illustrations (Appendix D) where multiple drawings are shown. This group of participants, as stated in chapter four of this thesis, drew many forms of prayer. Figures were seen praying in Church individually, in groups, with the laying on of hands, kneeling, standing, sitting with hands together or with arms raised. Figures were shown praying in school, beside the bed, or walking down the street. This group of participants drew 27 illustrations of prayer which can be compared with the

much lower number of illustrations from the other five school groups (17 from the government school, 16 from the Muslim school, 15 from the independent school, 12 from the Catholic school and 11 from the Jewish school). These data, along with the responses in Table 6.2, could suggest that for these participants, learning to pray involved many different possibilities which engaged them in personal choice.

The responses of the participants from this group in the sentence completion exercise confirm this analysis. Five of the ten participants identified a time in Church as when they felt most prayerful. In the other responses, prayer was seen as a personal reality connected with feelings and needs. Feelings and needs can be connected with the many stories told in the general part of the interview.

In the interview data, many personal stories were related by the participants in this group. Participant G2 relayed a story about her aunt, who through prayer was healed of breast cancer and her own experience of being prayed for by the Pastor which made her "feel special". Another participant G4 spoke of her mother, father and sister all praying "in tongues". Similarly, G5 spoke about her grandmother praying 'in tongues" as "weird words . . . maybe of an angel . . . somehow they make you feel happy". This girl also told a long story about praying for a fine day on her birthday. Participant B1 spoke of the time when he "prayed for Jesus to come into my heart" and he "felt better, happier and peaceful". A further example is seen in participant B2 who reported that he saw a vision of an angel in his back yard when he was in Year Three. This vision was related to the participant's motivation to pray, and became part of his ongoing commitment to prayer. Participant B3 explained his own complex understanding of the life of the human spirit, "inside you, you have this spirit . . . keeps you alive and runs your body".

In prayer he believed, his spirit was strengthened and he could "get all of the bad out of your brain". This participant also had strong feelings attached to the time when he prayed and "gave my heart to Jesus". Another participant, B4, believed prayer helped when his dog ran away. Participant B5 told the story of a time when he was three years old, and his family were amazed when he started praying "in tongues". He also told of other present experiences with prayer, which were identified as helpful in keeping the family together. It seems from this group of participants that the environment of the shared faith community of school, home and worship centre encouraged learning and experimentation in a wide range of prayer possibilities.

In summary the participants from this school understood learning to pray from:

- A personal relationship to God through Jesus (an inner knowing)

- Agreement between Church, school and home

- Following an example in communal prayer

- Experience with family and relatives.

Government School

The question concerning how people learn to pray elicited the following responses from the participants in the government school group. Words given particular emphasis by the participants are shown in quotation marks.

Table 6.3 :
Government school responses - How do people learn to pray?

Participants' codes	School	Worship Centre	At home	Person	Media	Other
G1	X	Church Synagogue Mosque		Grand-mother Dad		"From the generations"
G2		Church	"If the parents are religious"		The Simpsons	Books
G3		Church			Sound of Music Sister Act	"Just know"
G4		Church		Priest		"follow examples"
G5			X	"People who go to church a lot"	The Simpsons	
B1		Church "maybe"			Videos TV Movies	
B2			X		Movies	Bible reading Believing
B3	X	Church	X			"At the Wall"
B4	X	Church				
B5		Church		Priest		"From your brain"
total	3	8	4	4	5	7

The participants in this group showed an awareness of the Church as the place where prayer could be learned. This was not linked as consistently to the influence of school and family as in the two previous school groups. Although five of the ten participants spoke of going to Church, these were occasional visits, and none of the participants spoke of regular attendance. It may be the case that the irregular attendance

is reflected in the low perception of individual family members as teachers of prayer.

Only one participant spoke of her father and grandmother in this regard.   However, the

data show that all participants expressed some knowledge of Church.   Participant B3 was

baptised as a baby "to get rid of sins" but had not been to Church since.   The cousin of

B2 was known to go to Church once a year, and G2 knew two girls who went to Church.

Three participants spoke of the weekly non-compulsory Christian Religious Education

class as a place where prayer could be learned.   In addition to learning to pray in Church,

one participant spoke of the possibility of learning to pray in a Mosque or Synagogue.

The data from all participants in this group showed an association between learning to

pray and the Christian faith tradition of the Church.

The next most common identification of a way to learn to pray was through the

mass media.   Five of the ten participants identified special TV programs and films.   Two

participants stated that learning to pray came from an inner form of knowledge, and

another thought it came as a form of social inheritance from the previous generations.

The Bible and books were also identified as resources in learning to pray.   These sources

of knowledge about prayer indicate an emphasis on personal research and observation,

largely outside of the faith community.

This view was consistent with data from the interviews when comparing Table

6.3 with the complete collection of interview data.   The sentence completion exercise

showed that prayer was valued by this group in a personal way with no mention of being

part of a community of faith.   Feelings of sadness and need were most often identified as

leading to prayer and these were the moments when prayer was recognised as powerful or

special.   The data in reference to these special "times" in prayer are recorded in

Appendix F.   A common understanding linked learning to pray with situations of need and strong emotions.   Participant G5 spoke of prayer as something coming from hope and leading to gaining greater hope.   She concluded "most of the people who stop praying, give up hope . . . commit suicide".

The analysis of data from this group showed a Christian understanding of prayer learned from brief experiences in Church or through school CRE classes.   This was supplemented by ideas from the largely Christian portrayal of prayer in the media. In summary the participants from this school understood learning to pray from:

- Going to Church

- The mass media

- An inner source – initiated by feelings

- School CRE classes.

Independent School

The question concerning how people learn to pray elicited the following responses from the participants in the independent school group.   Words given particular emphasis by the participants are shown in quotation marks.

Table 6.4 :
Independent school responses - How do people learn to pray?

Participants' codes	School	Worship centre	At home	Person	Media	Other
G1	X	Church			TV	
G2	X			Story of Jesus	Sound of Music	"Somewhere inside" Song – "vespers"
G3		Church maybe				"Just pick it up…like hoping"
G4	X			Grandmother	TV- SBS	"Don't learn …you already just know"
G5	X "I guess"		X			Books
B1	X		X "habit"			
B2		Church				"Don't need to learn" Bible Book of prayers
B3		Church	Parents might teach		TV	"Just comes out" "Other countries… Greece sing a lot"
B4		Church		Auntie		
B5	X	Church	X		TV	Books "When you can't do anything else"
Total	6	6	4	3	5	7

The responses from the participants at this school were similar to the responses from the government school. Church and Chapel at school were considered as ways to learn to pray in the Christian tradition. From the interview data for these participants, it

can be seen that Church experience was limited and attendance was spasmodic.

Participant G1 had been to a wedding and a funeral in Church, and participant G4 had

been with her grandmother.   Participant B2 sometimes went to Church at Christmas or

Easter, while B3 had an Orthodox family background in Greece and the aunt of B4

regularly attended Church.   Three of the participants spoke of prayer connected with

Church as a "religious" thing to do, and two of the participants said that they were not

religious.   All of the participants said they had prayed, and all but one considered prayer

an important present aspect of personal life.   The data indicated that prayer was learned

in the Christian tradition, but not through being part of a traditional faith community.

The understanding of prayer as a personal activity is reflected in the data

displayed in Table 6.4.   Six of the ten participants considered that prayer did not need to

be learned but could just "come out" from "somewhere inside", "like hoping".   The

personal aspect of learning prayer in this way seemed removed from the family, as only

two family members (a grandmother and an aunt) were mentioned as teachers of prayer.

The data indicated that participants found greater understanding of prayer coming from

the media and their own research in books of prayer, the Bible and consideration of the

life of Jesus.

As the data from Table 6.4 is linked to the wider data from the interviews, some

references were noted regarding the importance of communal experiences of prayer.

The examples of prayer at a funeral, wedding and at Christmas and Easter were noted as

important for three participants.   This could indicate a valuing of learning in the

community of faith.   However, for this group of participants, most of the powerful or

important moments of prayer were identified as personal times of need or sadness where prayer was a solitary activity.

The analysis of the responses from this group of participants showed that prayer was considered to be learned from three sources.   These were the Christian tradition of church and school, and the examples of prayer in the media.   A number of participants considered prayer as a natural inner ability that did not need to be taught or learned.

In summary the participants from this school understood learning to pray from:

- Going to Church or school Chapel

- Inner knowledge – initiated by need or feelings

- Mass media and personal research from books

Jewish School

The question concerning how people learn to pray elicited the following responses from the participants in the Jewish school group.   Words given particular emphasis by the participants are shown in quotation marks.

Table 6.5 :
Jewish school responses - How do people learn to pray?

Participants' codes	School	Worship Centre	At home	Person	Media	Other
G1		Synagogue		Teachers		Siddur "In the community"
G2	X	Synagogue				Siddur
G3	X	Synagogue	X			Siddur Torah
G4	X	Synagogue		parents		Siddur
G5	X	Synagogue				"Listening to others" Siddur
B1	X	Synagogue	X			Siddur Torah
B2				Dad		Siddur "Bit by bit"

B3	X	*Synagogue*	Father		Tefilin and Thalit
B4	X				Siddur "From awareness of gratitude"
B5	X		X		Siddur
total	8	7	3	4	10

In the Orthodox Jewish tradition of the school attended by the participants, as shown in Table 6.5, there was a common awareness of learning to pray from the Siddur (Jewish prayer book).   Learning Hebrew, the language of the Siddur, was a significant part of the school curriculum.   This was obvious in the large number of posters and charts in Hebrew observed in the Year Five classroom. (Appendix C).   One third of the curriculum was devoted to 'Hebrew Studies', a combination of history, religion and the Hebrew language.

The use of the Siddur was linked to prayer both at school and at the Synagogue. There was class learning time at school, prayer time at school and prayer time at the family Synagogue on the Sabbath.   It was observed (Appendix C) that the school prayer time was conducted in part of the Assembly Hall facing the Ark of the Covenant, (a worship focus containing the Torah) and this officially made the assembly space into a Synagogue.   When students identified learning about prayer at "school" they may therefore have meant the actual lesson time or the Synagogue prayer experience at school.   The data from the interviews displayed however, that the word "Synagogue" was used to refer to the Synagogue the family attended on Friday night or Saturday.   In this way school and Synagogue could be identified as two separate but related aspects of learning that were both academic and experiential.   In this group of participants, school,

family and worship centre appeared to be mutually supportive for children learning to pray in the Jewish tradition.

There was agreement displayed between the data of Table 6.5 and the wider collection of data from the interviews. Much of the time in the interviews was given to explaining the particular aspects of Jewish prayer such as, the special customs of bowing, standing, sitting, aspects of confession, supplication and the "Alleluias". All of these had significance and were part of the extensive learning necessary for Jewish prayer. Explanation of the significance of the clothing of prayer, the Kipa, Tefillin and Thalit were considered part of the meaning and understanding of prayer. Many participants observed that the language of prayer was difficult and only a portion was known at this stage of their education. Learning to pray in the Jewish tradition was considered to be an ever-expanding duty, learning that continued through life. However, within the limited knowledge of the complexities of the prayer ritual, one participant also spoke of the delight taken by God in seeing children pray. All participants expressed some acceptance of their current limitations in taking part in the prayer ritual, and most spoke of the hope of greater understanding in the future. The understanding of prayer as part of Jewish communal living was a common idea expressed through the interview data. Prayer in this way was perceived as an ongoing learning task, linked to the transition into adult life.

The sentence completion exercise displayed agreement with the data from Table 6.5. Four of the ten participants identified a Synagogue worship ritual as a time when they felt most "prayerful", with prayer giving "spiritual meaning" (G3) when surrounded by family and an awareness of "being Jewish" (B4). When identifying a moment when

prayer was powerful or important six participants identified a time of communal prayer, two nominated Synagogue worship on Saturday, two spoke of Bar Mitzvah, one spoke of Bat Mitzvah and one remembered leading worship.   Therefore it could be seen from the data that the environment of home, school and worship centre were identified together as sources of learning about prayer in the Jewish tradition using the Hebrew language.

In summary, the participants from this school understood learning to pray from:

- The Siddur (prayer book)

- Agreement between Synagogue, school and home

- Following an example in communal prayer.

Muslim School

The question concerning how people learn to pray elicited the following responses from the participants in the Muslim school group.   Words given particular emphasis by the participants are shown in quotation marks.

Table 6.6 :
Muslim school responses - How do people learn to pray?

Participants' codes	School	Worship Centre	At home	Person	Media	Other
G1	X		X	Imam		"From the heart"
G2	X			Mum		
G3			X	My Dad		In Arabic Q'ran
G4	X			From adults Parents		Q'ran
G5	X	Mosque		Parents Teachers		"Being born into a Muslim family" In Arabic
B1		Mosque		Parents Imam		Prophets "From the heart"

B2	X	Mosque		Mum	Q'ran
B3	X	Mosque	X	"From my Dad"	Q'ran
B4	X			"From the adults"	Q'ran
B5	X	Mosque		Parents Teachers	"Born into a Muslim family or you can learn and change"
total	8	5	3	10	9

The participants from the Muslim school shared the view of learning to pray in the Islamic tradition from their school and from significant individuals in their lives. The centrality of the Q'ran and the Arabic language for prayer were other significant aspects of the data. The Mosque as the worship centre was recognised as an important place to learn to pray by five of the ten participants. As with the Jewish group, the Muslim group of participants expressed the idea that home, school and worship centre were joint sources in learning to pray within the faith tradition.

The wider interview data supported the emphasis found in the data of Table 6.6. There was a common understanding that prayer from the faith tradition was learned from the family, school and the Mosque. All of the female participants explained the importance of "proper" clothing for prayer. This was seen as a family matter as well as a school rule, as parents and school upheld the need for uniform clothing. The head covering was explained as an aid to concentration (G5) and as form of virtue (G4). The washing ritual was explained as part of the learning of prayer, with the names of the "helpers" of "The Messenger" (Mohammad) being invoked as part of this ritual (G3). The actions in prayer, particularly the placing of arms high on the chest with the right hand over the left were explained by four of the female participants. The male

participants also explained in detail the various parts of the prayer ritual. Participant B1 drew details of the seven parts of the ritual and spoke of the complex ordering of cycles of prayer used at the five different daily prayer times. Some prayer should be said aloud and some should be said silently. There were regulations for prayer when traveling or if ill. There were also opportunities for extra prayer ("Suna") that would supplement the compulsory ritual ("Fud"). It was apparent from the interview data that the participants were engaged in a long process of understanding prayers in the Islamic tradition. Learning to pray in the tradition was a developmental process, and adult help was needed in understanding and accomplishing the many aspects involved in "proper" prayer.

Learning Arabic and learning parts of the Q'ran by rote were also involved in learning to pray. Participant B3 spoke of his desire to learn all of the 114 parts of the Q'ran to use in prayer. He explained that his grandfather knew all of these parts, and this gave great benefit to his grandfather who was, through this accomplishment, enabled to take 70 Muslims to Heaven with him. Participant G3 spoke of the need to learn parts of the Q'ran for use in the prayer ritual. At the time of the interview she was engaged in this task and could recite eleven pages.

The data from Table 6.6 links to the wider interview data related to special moments in prayer for the participants. The communal aspect of learning to pray was a common understanding. When identifying a powerful or important experience of prayer, seven of the ten participants spoke of communal worship times in the Mosque or in Mecca, three participants spoke of moments where private matters were expressed. When asked to complete the sentence "I feel most prayerful when…" six participants

recognised communal worship times, one participant recognised time in prayer with his

father and three participants spoke of personal prayers of thanksgiving or intercession.

The analysis of the data from this group of participants displayed learning to pray

in the Muslim tradition as coming from the teachings of the school, Mosque and home,

all based in the learning of the Q'ran in the Arabic language.

In summary the participants from this school understood learning to pray from:

- Agreement between Mosque school and home

- Study of the Q'ran and the Arabic language

- Experiences with parents and teachers

- An inner source.

Combined Findings

Table 6.7 gives a comparative overview of the data in reference to the perception

of how people learn to pray.   It is compiled from the Tables 6.1- 6.6 showing the

response to the particular question related to learning to pray.

Table 6.7 :
Comparison by school group - How do people learn to pray?

School	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
School	9	2	3	6	8	8
Church	8	5	8	6		
Mosque			1			5
Synagogue			1		7	
At home	1	2	4	4	3	3
Person	8	7	4	3	4	10
Media	1		5	5		
Other	4	9	7	7	10	9

The table above shows that participants perceived that learning to pray takes place in

various ways.   These are: through the faith environment of home school and worship

centre, through an inner knowledge or through the media.   These sources of learning

about prayer will be examined and discussed in relation to the education systems in the second part of this chapter.

Part Two - Discussion

Introduction

This study has shown two aspects of learning about prayer through the data. First it has demonstrated the cognitive form of understanding aspects of prayer. Prayer has been identified as a human activity of communication with the divine, taking various forms and related to different aspects of human life. These understandings of prayer have been shown to correlate largely with the teachings of faith communities, and this teaching has most often taken place in the family, school and worship centre. Secondly there is an experiential component of knowledge of prayer. Prayer has been seen to be understood from the inside perspective of the participant's experience. This aspect of prayer in many cases has been shown to be learned through the faith community of family, school and worship centre. However, there is evidence in the data of additional sources of learning in the experiential form of prayer.

The two aspects of learning about prayer and learning to pray are both considered in the discussion about learning. From the data these two perspectives seem closely connected. When asked "How do people learn to pray"? participants responded in many cases, "I learned to pray in kindergarten" or "My Mum taught me ". Therefore the responses from the participants were mixed. There was difficulty in identifying the difference between concepts of knowledge about prayer and the prayer experience of the participant. However, in the discussion an attempt will be made to distinguish between

these two aspects of learning to pray.   Although it is recognised that a complete

separation is not possible, the concept of separation is presumed within much of the

theory about liberal contemporary religious education, sometimes called

"phenomenological" religious education (Moran, 1989, p. 96).   As aspects of education

are considered, a distinction is needed in teaching about prayer and experience in the

practice of prayer

This study was conducted using groups of school students where the participants

were part of a school environment which, in many cases, was a faith community.   The

existence of fees for private schools led to a self selection process where parents who

valued the distinctive curriculum and ethos tended to send their children to such schools.

The religious orientation of the school was one distinctive value.   Parents with a strong

interest in educating their children in their religious faith tended to choose a religious

school for them.   However, this is not always the case, as some parents choose the

religious school for other reasons, even though they would not be unhappy about the

religious orientation and practice of the school.   So it was found that in schools

providing extensive religious education programs, both in formal classroom teaching and

in worship activities, the parents who elected to send their children to these schools also

tended to follow the same faith tradition.   However, in all schools the primary task was

education in preparation for life in the wider society, and not just the development of

religious understanding and the experience of religious practices.

The curriculum time given to religious studies is important when recognizing the

different emphases of the different schools.   Table 6.8 below outlines the differences as a

summary of the observation notes of Appendix C.   The time is shown as an approximate

percentage of the total school time.   It should be noted that Jewish Studies and Islamic

Studies comprise teaching in language and history as well as religious studies. These

large blocks of curriculum time encompassed religious education as part of learning

language and history.

Table 6.8 :
Formal teaching time allocated to religious education by school group

	Catholic	*Christian*	*Government*	*Independent*	*Jewish*	*Muslim*
Formal class lessons	8%	8%	1% non-compulsory	-	33% Jewish Studies	33% Islamic Studies
Assemblies with prayer	6%	-	-	1%	0.5%	4%
Worship activities	2%	5%	-	0.5%	7%	6%

The findings in Part one of this chapter lead to the proposal of seven interpretive

schemes for discussion.   The findings relate to differences in the educational

environment, the perception of "inner knowledge" about prayer, and the influence of the

mass media as a source of learning about prayer.   These findings are discussed in

relation to the literature reviewed in chapter three.   Discussion of implications for faith-

oriented schools and schools in the government secular system relate the findings to the

contemporary education system in Australia.

Finding One - Different Faith Environments Affect the Learning of Prayer
          Throughout this study differences have been observed between groups of

participants belonging to different faith environments.   In particular the participants

attending the Jewish and Muslim schools shared a common understanding that their way

of prayer was uniquely correct.   The learning of prayer was seen to be a matter set down

in ritual and language with parents, teachers and worship leaders dispensing that knowledge.   As children had to learn a second language for prayer, children always had less ability in comparison with the adults; language skill was limited and this meant participation in prayer was limited as well. The participants recognised that prayers were first learned by rote and later learned with understanding.   In this way prayer was learned developmentally, in parallel with the learning of the language. Because of the difficulty with language, the whole faith community was recognised by participants as necessary in helping children to learn to pray.   Children were acknowledged as part of the community, but they were not expected to participate fully in all of the worship activities. A number of the Jewish participants recognised this in the Sabbath Synagogue worship where they remained in the community for the beginning of the ritual and then went outside to play.   This understanding was not restricted to the participants from the Jewish and Muslim schools.   It was also noted that some participants in the Christian school tradition considered they were unable to take a full part in the worship activities. Parallel worship and learning activities in Children's Church or Sunday School were provided.

The place of the faith environment can be identified through the data relating to the learning of prayer.   The two aspects of learning, outlined above, can be seen to relate to the faith community.   In the first case as children are taught about prayer a community of knowledge is needed to help students.   To be understood in an academic way, prayer needed to be understood within the larger concept of religion.   In the interview data this awareness was shown; the function of prayer was related to the participant's image of God, sacred text and many stories relating to experiences in prayer.

Finding Two - Problems are Associated with some Faith-Centered Learning About Prayer

A number of authors cited in the literature review referred to the complexity involved in learning to pray (Godin, 1968; Soares-Prabhu, 1990; Tabbarah, 1988; Twerski, 2001). They noted that language, comprehension skills and critical thinking are needed for education about prayer. Moore and Habel (1982) considered religions to be "internally complex systems" (p.14) requiring sophisticated skills to analyse, understand and interpret. Alexander (1998) noted that critical thinking is at the heart of education and education in religion is no exception. O'Brien (1999) considered that postmodern religious education was governed by practical theology or pastoral theology. This meant that it was increasingly presented as a complex "hermeneutical conversation" (p. 316) between the faith tradition and the interpretation of the culture. Living in the contemporary Australian multifaith culture it seems necessary that this dialogue between the faith of the community and the wider community be established (Delors, 1996; D. Smith and Carson, 1998). These authors suggested that a liberal educational view point should be followed as a way toward peace and stability. Murdock (1996) stated that the world is now post-colonial and in a state of searching for unity, and in that context, religious education should emphasise the searching dimension of faith and reduce the "confessional apologetics" (p. 11). That means that the faith communities who establish schools have a responsibility to the student to teach about other faith systems as part of a general education in preparation for living in a multifaith environment. However, this study has suggested that this responsibility to teach about other faith traditions is not taken in some schools where a strong religious teaching is demonstrated through the

curriculum.   The participants attending the Muslim, Jewish and Christian schools did not demonstrate such a liberal view of religious education.

Finding Three - Problems are Associated with Faith-Centered Learning To Pray

Experience of prayer or the practice of prayer is the second aspect of learning shown through the study.   This could be related to the literature on faith development by Fowler (1974) where children were identified as moving through stages showing dependence on the community of faith in the earliest stages.   From Fowler's perspective, the school, family and worship community can assist in nurturing the primary stages of faith in the child.   It has been shown in the data of this study, that many school communities do expose participants to, and involve participants in, the act of prayer. The possibility of positive links for the child with prayer can be given through prayer modeled at school assembly, prayer seen in adult worship or prayer with parents in the home.

Many different examples were seen in the data showing the involvement of participants in prayer through their faith community.   However, the experience of prayer for the participants was often linked to academic teaching regarding what is acceptable prayer and what is unacceptable prayer in the different schools.   In some of the schools, participants had a view of prayer restricted to the faith community associated with the school.   Some authors have suggested that these matters are of concern in a multifaith, multicultural society with an aim of mutual understanding and respect (Astley and Francis, 1996).   The literature suggested that the experience of prayer within a faith community needs to be held in tension with the concern for social cohesion and respect

for others ways in the wider community.   It is suggested that dialogue is needed to address this issue within faith traditions and between faith traditions.

Finding Four- Children's Spiritual Experiences are Unequally Valued

One further issue in relation to learning to pray was raised by Hart (2003).   He proposed that all children have spiritual ability and sensitivity and it is the adult society that often acts to repress and denigrate the spiritual.   The incidence of children who have an "imaginary friend" (p. 136) who helps them and keeps them company, is one example given by Hart.   It is the adult community who expect children to leave these imaginary ideas behind and move into "reality".   As was observed in the data, many faith traditions have rules and structures that determine which aspects of spirituality are deemed acceptable, and children are expected to learn these rules and expectations.   However, the data from participants in the Christian school tradition showed one contemporary community where the mystical "seeing" is valued by people of all ages.   Participant CS B2 reported an experience when he and his sister saw the "heavens come" and an angel appear in their back yard.   It seems that the faith community had acknowledged this experience as legitimate, and it had become a valuable part of his learning how to pray. Other aspects of prayer in the Christian school community also showed an awareness of the spiritual as part of everyday life.   Four participants spoke of miracles of healing in their family (G1, G3, B4, B5) and others related miraculous answers to their own prayers (G5, B1, B2, B3, B5).   From the example of the participants in this school it can be seen that some faith traditions allow a wider appreciation of spiritual learning and experience for children.

Finding Five - "Inner knowledge" is Perceived to be a Resource when Learning to Pray

Many participants expressed the idea that prayer came from within. They offered the opinion that prayer was part of being human and did not need to be learned in a formal sense. The discussion of this perception of "inner knowledge" of prayer can take many forms.

"Inner Knowledge" could be a psychological error.

It could be argued that the understanding of learning from an "inner" source is a questionable position, as most of these participants had a broadly Christian understanding of prayer seen in forgiveness and acceptability to God. For example participant GS G1 recognised God as someone she could trust with any secret, or participant GS B4 saw God as someone you could tell if you had done something wrong, while IS G4 thought of God as someone who would understand if you were really sad. In the words of Moore and Habel (1982) "Christianity is a semi-autonomous institution in the west" (p.19). Christianity has been so much a foundation for general thinking that it has become invisible as a faith tradition. This is similar to the idea that a fish is unaware of the water in which it lives. A number of participants noted they were not religious yet they held religious beliefs about God being there, caring, being interested in them and forgiving them, in other words broadly Christian ideas about God.

"Inner knowledge" could be part of innate spirituality.

On the other hand the perception of an "inner knowledge" of prayer was similar to the ideas of many authors cited in the literature on spirituality. Hay (1998), Nye (1996), Coles (1990), Hart (2003) and Robinson (1977) all presented the belief that spirituality, the sense of connectedness with the transcendent, is an innate human characteristic. A sense of connection with the divine is part of spirituality and a reaching out to the divine

in prayer is viewed as "natural".   It could also be linked to the theological understanding of the faith traditions represented in this study, that show an understanding that humans were made "in the image of God" (Genesis 1:27) and were originally in a close relationship with God (Genesis 3:9).

"Inner knowledge" could be related to the growth of secularisation.
The "inner knowledge" of prayer might be related to the theory of Fenn (2001) who considered that "the more secular a society becomes the more open to the Sacred it is" (p. 7).   Similarly Hervieu-Leger (2000) says "Modern society may well corrode their traditional base (the base of religion) . . . however, the same societies open up spaces or sectors that only religion can fill . . . Utopian spaces" (Hervieu-Leger, 2000, p. ix).   That is, the desire for a sense of identity and future found in a relationship with the divine is recognised even more strongly when the influence of faith traditions diminish.   Tarnas (1991) expressed the postmodern position as enabling "a more authentic experience of the numinous, a wider sense of deity" (p. 404).   Therefore spiritual understanding linked to an awareness of God, and a relationship to God, could be considered as part of the secular movement.

"Inner knowledge" could be a psychological reality.
The sense of an "inner knowledge" of prayer to God by children links with Object Relations theory (Rizzuto, 1979; St. Clair, 1994; Ulanov, 1986).   The psychological understanding from these authors stated that an image of God is within all people as a central part of life.   The relationship with an image of God is seen through this theory to move from an image of primary attachment with a care-giver into more and more complex images of God who both supports the person in life situations and challenges the

individual to move into the uncertain future. These images could be seen to correspond to the perceptions of prayer in the data from the participants, where prayer to God both comforts and challenges. In many examples, reaching out to this God in prayer was considered not to be taught, but to come somehow from "within". The psychological understanding of prayer by Ulanov (1982) and Godin (1968) combine the idea of Object Relations Psychology with theological understanding. Their work provides a comprehensive frame of reference in which the concept of "inner knowledge" of prayer could receive further research attention.

Therefore the "inner knowledge" of learning to pray could be understood from many perspectives. The number of references from the participants to this study who considered that prayer did come from an inner source of knowing could be related to the ideas of Coupland (1995), who spoke of the difficulties, dilemmas and needs of contemporary youth. He concluded:

> My secret is that I need God- that I am sick and can no longer make it alone. I need God to help me give, because I no longer seem to be capable of giving; to help me be kind, as I no longer seem capable of kindness; to help me love, as I seem beyond being able to love (p. 289)

As the society becomes more secular, with less communal worship of God, it is possible that the sacred becomes more of an inner personal reality. The sense of "inner knowledge" about prayer, the idea of prayer being a natural kind of instinct is a finding from the data for further investigation.

Finding Six - The Mass Media is a Resource when Learning about Prayer

Table 6.3 and 6.4 have identified the role of the media as a source of learning about prayer in cultural environments where participants do not report living in a community where prayer is readily experienced. This links with the theory proposed in chapter four, where, within the secular culture, the image of God is shown to exist in new forms (Fenn, 2001). The secular culture of the mass media provides a wide selection of cultural possibilities and one of these is the position of having faith in God expressed in prayer. O' Brien (1999) proposed that the postmodern vision of society is a "collage", as distinct from the older view of society as a "melting pot" (p. 317). In the past the immigration system was viewed as a "melting pot" where new groups assimilated into a single cohesive Australian society. However, contemporary multicultural Australian life allows the retention of distinctions between groups, hence the term "collage".

The mass media reflects this shift to this image of "collage" through the portrayal of varied images of spiritual life. Documentaries and the popular "soap operas" display many different ethnic situations. The participants in this study identified images of prayer from the media, and some of these were seen to reflect a Christian view of prayer. For example the film *The Sound of Music* and *Sister Act* were mentioned as sources from which prayer could be learned, and these could be recognised as traditional forms of Christian thinking. However, the TV show, *The Simpsons* falls into a different genre. *The Simpsons* is a cartoon series from the United States depicting a family involved in various ethical dilemmas. The humorous approach shows critical appraisal of many traditional viewpoints, often highlighting the ambiguity of situations and taking an antiauthoritarian stance. Finding an image of prayer within this cartoon series is part of what O'Brien identifies as the postmodern culture where the new and the old traditions

are seen to be in "conversation" (p. 316).   This is linked to Kegan's (1994) identification

of the state of most young adult thinking in contemporary western society as "fourth

order consciousness" (p. 345).   Fourth order consciousness, according to Kegan,

involves self-directed learning with an emphasis on critical analysis and acceptance of

diversity, rather than an accepting of the more simple traditional respect for power and

status seen in one point of view.   Some children's television programs show the images

of the "fourth order of consciousness" portrayed in Kegan's work, such as *The Simpsons*

and *South Park*.

As well as the traditional Christian understanding, other forms of spirituality are

found in the contemporary mass media like images of witchcraft and wizardry.   The

successes of the books and films in the *Harry Potter*[4] series are examples of this.   The

images of the "collage" of O'Brien (1999) or the "spiritual supermarket" of Crawford and

Rossiter (1996) become apt descriptors of contemporary secular learning about religion

and prayer, as choice and possibilities abound.

Another area of the mass media noted by participants as a source of learning

about prayer, were news broadcasts particularly those in times of national disaster.   The

images of people praying after the terrorist attack on New York (2001) or the bombing in

Bali that killed many Australian tourists (2002) were identified as influential in learning

how to pray.   These carried high levels of emotion for the participants who could

identify with the fear and confusion of the situation portrayed.

Documentary programs on television were also mentioned by some participants.

In these programs, participants were exposed to prayer forms and rituals that were outside

of their immediate environment.   Participants who experienced little contact with a faith

tradition saw and evaluated various images of prayer for themselves.   Half of the participants, who did not consider that they belonged to a faith community (reported in Tables 6.3 and 6.4) indicated that the mass media was a source of learning about prayer. On the other hand where participants did belong to a faith community through their family, school or worship centre the identification of the mass media as a source of learning was minimal.

Finding Seven - Learning About Prayer in other Faith Traditions is not Equally Valued
Differences in the understanding of and learning about other faith perspectives were further features shown in the data.   For the Muslim participants, a strong understanding was expressed that Islam was the revealed truth and other religious traditions were in error.   Obedience to God was shown through following the prayer ritual set out by Mohammad, the greatest prophet.   One participant said that "Shatan (Satan) was going round the world making Muslims, non-Muslims" and now "all Muslims trying to make other religions come back to Muslim" (MS B5).   The Jewish group also recognised the Jewish way to pray as correct, but two participants from this group spoke about other traditions of prayer and belief.   Although multifaith acceptance was expressed by some participants from the Christian school, there was a similar expression of views by two participants who spoke of praying for their friends and family to "know Jesus" (CS G3 and CS B5).   Multifaith understanding and respect were expressed more readily by the participants coming from the government, independent, and Catholic schools.   Investigation of the actual curriculum content in the religious education programs at schools to determine multifaith awareness, could be an extension of this study.

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[4] A popular series of books by J.K Rowling published by Bloomsbury in the United Kingdom

Implications for the Faith-Sponsored School

As can be seen in the discussion above, the role of the faith tradition is complex. In the Australian situation, independent schools have been established by faith communities alongside a secular state government system. Most of the schools sponsored by a faith tradition, presented an aim of faith development as one of the aims of the curriculum. There was a sense of responsibility expressed in school publications that the school would nurture the child in the faith of the parents.

The observation notes in Appendix C also show the sense of wider responsibility to present a broad liberal educational. The multifaith dimension of this broad emphasis was acknowledged to varying degrees by the schools. It seems that the aim of a liberal education to understand and respect differing viewpoints and beliefs in some cases was not actively encouraged.

As stated in the introduction to this chapter, there are two forms of education in relation to prayer. The first is education about prayer in a wide sense, involving a multifaith understanding. This is the academic study of prayer outlined in the literature review (Grimmitt, 1973; Moran, 1989). Secondly there is education in prayer, teaching that leads into the experiential level of actually praying, individually or in community (Berryman, 1991; Proffitt, 1998). This study has demonstrated the value of prayer through the eyes of children, both in the understanding of prayer and personal experiences in prayer. The participants in this study from schools sponsored by a religious tradition were aware of the influence of the school as a source of their understanding of prayer. The worship activities were also recognised as significant in the teaching/learning exchange. The school publications from the Catholic, Christian, Jewish and Muslim traditions expressed the aim that the faith tradition be taught as part

of the curriculum.   The data showed that this aim was being fulfilled.   This reinforces the common perception of school as a place where religious culture can be transmitted.

However, the data also show that the extent to which the academic study of prayer and the experiences of prayer are developed, depends on the type of school.   It seems that in some faith-oriented schools, the learning about prayer in other faith traditions has not been adopted as an educational aim.   Rather teaching children to pray as part of their own faith community has taken a more prominent position in the curriculum.   This was observed in the Christian, Jewish and Muslim schools.

The literature suggested that the situation is not simple.   Moran (1989) stated that the act of education is in a state of tension with the faith tradition that establish schools. "Schools are almost self contradictions…they exist to pass on a tradition but schooling makes the tradition vulnerable to doubt" (Moran, 1989, p. 51).   This can be applied to any school but for schools, sponsored by a religious tradition the tension is increased.   In Moran's view the process of education is a process of questioning and critical examination.   This can cause difficulty when a religious tradition wishes to transmit beliefs and faith to the next generation.   Therefore leading children into an experience of prayer and belief in a school setting is not a simple process.

Education about prayer.
This research has shown differences in levels of understanding and respect for different forms of prayer amongst the participants coming from different schools.   Some participants displayed a respect for other traditions of prayer, others did not.   The literature reviewed in chapter two, had a common emphasis on the need for multifaith awareness and respect.   O'Brien (1991) suggested that both the tradition and the wider

culture are in constant "conversation" in religious education. This means following the intentions of the sponsoring tradition of the school in passing on the faith tradition but also being aware of the current forms of thought and faith in the wider community. This was explained further by Moran (1981) who considered religious education to be both a respect for the belief and practices of the faith community and the development of self-critical skills. He stated that good religious education is a process of first understanding the personal sense of being connected to a faith community and secondly developing respect for others. The first stage was an awareness of the faith tradition of the family, leading to the second stage of rational criticism and an awareness of other faith traditions giving a pluralistic understanding and respect. The final stage in the education process presented by Moran was the stage of particular religious commitment with reverent understanding and acceptance of others. In this way there was a possibility of deep personal faith and a breadth of knowledge leading to tolerance. The child's understanding became "rooted and reverent" (p. 162).

Similarly Rossiter (2003) considered that a sense of personal meaning and identity, gained from a faith tradition, was supplemented through an awareness of pluralism in faith choices. Hill (1990) contrasts religious education with indoctrination and concludes that religious education should be directed by ideals of autonomy and responsibility in relationships. Autonomy is an educational goal, in that through it the individual is able to make unforced decisions where personal rights and the rights of others are recognised. Rights are linked to responsibility in relationships where awareness and empathy are maintained for others.

David Steindl-Rast cited in Moran (1981, p. 162) stated that there is a division today "between those whose religious commitment is inclusive because they give themselves to the truth and those whose religious commitment is exclusive because they think of truth as something of which one takes possession." This is an epistemological issue where truth is identified in the relationship of negotiation rather than as a set revelation beyond question or discussion. It is recognised through this study that there is an unequal appreciation of the "inclusive" approach to learning about prayer by different faith traditions. This was reflected in the data, since some participants could only identify one source of knowledge about prayer that related to their own faith community.

Much contemporary research in Australia has been concerned to formulate an "inclusive" form of religious education (Burritt and Mountain, 2000; Mountain, 1998, 1999; National Professional Development Program, 1995). The presentation of "inclusive" or "exclusive" attitudes through religious education is an ongoing moral issue, needing further debate amongst schools sponsored by religious traditions. As Moran stated (1989, p. 23) religious education has a role in contemporary life "its development and spread are important for tolerance, understanding and peace in the world". It is the contention of this study that other forms of prayer should be presented to children as well as the study and practice of the forms of prayer used by the sponsoring faith community.

Implications for the Government School System

This section is a brief introduction, offering some ideas relating to the place of teaching about prayer and religion in the secular form of education provided by the government system. As stated in chapter two, the government system is complex in

Australia with different legislation relating to the teaching of religion or spirituality in each state. Some ideas are presented here that may help further debate on this topic.

The data from this research displayed that prayer was valued and used by children. The suggestion followed that the secular government system could be examined to consider the inclusion of spirituality and religious education. Hill (2002) stated that the priorities given in the subject selection in education is a practical expression of the values in the society. When a subject, like religion or spirituality, was excluded from the curriculum there was an implied devaluing of that subject. At present Hill suggested (2002, p. 3) the core curriculum is weighted towards the economic imperative of preparing young people to take their place in the job market. As religious education was excluded from the formal curriculum, the spiritual and religious aspects of quest for meaning and personal identity are devalued. Literature has suggested that in the contemporary situation of awareness of the need to encourage resilience, curriculum change is needed in education (Withers and Russell, 2001). It is the suggestion from this research, that religion and spirituality studies be included in the curriculum, as protective factors for the well-being in children (Victoria, 1999). The study of religion, spirituality and prayer could be considered as possible ways to develop resilience.

Ward (1997) stated that the postmodern is the "current climate where theological discourse is once again culturally significant" (p. xviii). Many contemporary voices within education (Delors, 1996) have considered the understanding of religious culture and spirituality as a necessary balance to the economic and material emphasis in education. Crawford and Rossiter (1996) expressed the view that moral and spiritual education was a necessary part of the curriculum in the contemporary, multifaith secular

environment.   Crawford and Rossiter (1996) suggested that learning can take place

though guided personal reflection and critical thinking, direct study of philosophy, ethics

and religion and indirect study through ethical questions of conscience, in issues, as they

arise in other subject areas, such as Science or Studies of Society and the Environment.

Rossiter (2003) cited educational policy statements that provide a mandate for spiritual

and moral education, and he concluded there is a "significant gap between the aims and

the practice" (p. 5).   Rossiter's concern is for education that will aid the search for

meaning and personal identity.   This is based in critical thinking, and evaluating the

many possible sets of meaning currently provided in society.   Rossiter suggested that

religious faith systems should be presented in curriculum planning as ways of responding

to issues of identity formation and meaning for young people.   Religious education,

including education about prayer, can be considered part of the wider concern for

education in spirituality, values and ethics.   Teaching about prayer could be part of the

academic understanding of faith traditions.

Teaching children how to pray is another issue, raising understandable anxiety

regarding the link between the prayer experience and the promotion of a particular

religious tradition.   However, various aspects of prayer as part of an awareness of

spirituality could be considered suitable for inclusion in curriculum models.   Spirituality

has a broader definition than religion, which would be an advantage in the multifaith

environment.   Definitions for spirituality are suggested in the literature, such as:

"An awareness that there is something other; something greater than the course of

everyday events" (Mc Creery, 1996, p. 197), the concept of "relational consciousness"

(Hay, 1998, p. 144) or an ability when "Solving problems of meaning and value" (Zohar and Mashall, 2000, p. 3).

The use of silence and reflection are identified by Berryman (1999) as an essential element of all religion.   Silence and reflection are also considered educationally valid as part of the process students use to internalize new concepts (Proffitt, 1998; Salzenberger-Wittenberg, 1983; D. Smith and Carson, 1998).   Many models and guidelines for courses aimed at spiritual development are available.   These courses include some forms of prayerful reflection that would not promote a particular religious tradition (Elkind, 1998; Fisher, 1999; Rossiter, 2003; Scheindlin, 1999; Stewart, 1996; Voiels, 2003).

Conclusion

This chapter has considered the perception of participants regarding the ways in which prayer is learned.   The data have shown that in the schools where a faith tradition is promoted through curriculum time and worship activities, the participants recognised the joint influence of home, school and the worship community as resources when learning to pray.   Some participants expressed ideas about prayer which were related to the particular faith environment of the school.   Participants from other schools showed an awareness of and respect for various types of prayer from other faith traditions. Participants coming from the schools where religious education was given little curriculum time, showed knowledge of prayer from brief encounters with the Church, as well as more private forms of understanding, sometimes coming from the mass media. Across all groups many participants considered knowledge about prayer as coming from within, from the feelings or from the mind, as a natural part of life.

The discussion linked the literature with aspects of the data in consideration of the differences discovered in participants belonging to various faith communities. Seven findings were presented from the data. The influence of the faith environment was identified as a source for learning about prayer. It was seen that different faith environments were associated with different levels of multifaith awareness and respect. The perception of "inner knowledge" was a factor identified by many participants when considering how prayer was learned. The literature offered many forms of explanation for this perception of "inner knowledge". The role of the mass media was also shown in the data to be influential as a resource when learning to pray, particularly for participants who did not come from a home where religion was practised. These findings were discussed in relation to the literature reviewed and extended into discussion of implications for aspects of the Australian education system.

The final chapter of this thesis will consolidate the three sets of findings regarding the meaning of prayer, the function of prayer and how prayer is learned, and thus findings from this study are shown to add to current knowledge in children's spirituality. The recommendations of the final chapter will be presented as applicable to the areas of student welfare, religious education practice and education for spirituality.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

As demonstrated in chapter one of this thesis, this research has been informed by various areas of academic research and theory.   These areas are: education for resilience, children's spirituality, the psychology of religion and religious education.   This chapter brings together the key findings of the research from chapters four, five and six, which have been related to the literature, then from the findings aspects of theory are proposed as having implications for professionals working in child welfare and religious education. The implications and recommendations are organised under the four areas of interest from which this study began.

This study makes a contribution to the better knowledge and understanding of the spirituality of children.   It contributes to understanding in the psychology of religion, through findings that relate prayer to resilience and coping.   Further implications relate to the teaching of religious education in schools that are sponsored by a religious tradition and in Church-related schools.

Aspects of Theory Generated through this Research - Consolidated Findings

The Meaning of Prayer

Chapter four of this thesis was concerned with the perceptions of the participants regarding the meaning of prayer, and with how they experienced prayer.   The final analysis of the data presented in chapter four summarised the meaning of prayer for these participants in terms of a major category and supporting concepts shown as properties.

Figure 4.7 provided a summary and consolidation of the data which had been derived

using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser, 1998; Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

Figure 4.7: The Meaning of Prayer (p. 132)

```
CATEGORY –Prayer is communication with the good God
PROPERTIES---Understood through faith traditions with defined images of God
                --God as: Above, Holy, Lord, Giver of life and Judge
                --Personal God as: Lover, Healer, Forgiver, Guide, Protector
                --Known in the person of Jesus
          ---Understood through personal images of God
          ---Expressing social connection with the faith community
          ---Expressing personal feelings and hopes
                --Praise
                --Grief
                --Need
                --Guilt
```

The category of prayer as "communication with the good God" was the common

understanding of the participants in the research.   The key findings in the category of the

meaning of prayer are listed below.

- The value of prayer for children was affirmed in a variety of ways and for a

  variety of reasons. All participants expressed the view that prayer was valued.

- Prayer was experienced as a part of personal life.

- Prayer was related to religion, and it was understood that the religious

  community used prayer as a communal activity.

- Different rituals in prayer experienced by participants in different schools

  were confirmed in the literature on prayer relating to the different faith

  traditions (Abdalati, 1996; Cohn and Fisch, 1996; Rahner, 1958)

- Prayer enabled the expression of strong feelings and hopes as in the

  psychological understanding of prayer by Ulanov (1982), Twerski (2001) and

  Godin (1968).

- Prayer was associated with uncontrollable situations in life. This was related to the understanding of prayer by Brueggemann (1986a), the resilience literature (*Risk and Protective Factors Survey*, 1999; Victoria, 1999; Withers and Russell, 2001) and the literature on coping (Frydenberg, 1999; Lazarus, 1991).

- The understanding of prayer by many was limited to their own experience of communal prayer within their own faith communities. Prayer was a form of connection, a regular ritual which was a comfortable part of family life and membership of a religious community.

- The communal form of prayer was often considered partial, requiring individual, personal intention to give prayer complete meaning.

- Some prayer was related to personal images of God not related to a community of faith.

- The meaning of prayer could be conceived in purely personal terms.

- Expressions of praise, joy and thanksgiving were part of the meaning of prayer.

This study was set in the Australian society said to be secularized, but it appears from the findings that prayer had a positive meaning for these participants. The findings from this study throws up questions about the degree of secularization in the society and the possibility that the decline in religious adherence may not necessarily lead to a decline in the practice of prayer. From the data it is estimated that two thirds of the participant group received family support for prayer and were part of a regular worshipping community, one third of the participants received little family support or

experience in prayer.   Yet all of the participants had used prayer and all spoke with a positive regard for prayer.   Many questions are raised through these findings.   Is prayer a natural part of childhood?   Will this regard for prayer be lost in adolescence?   Is it more acceptable to speak of prayer in childhood?   Are children more aware of their vulnerability and thus pray more?   Do young children have an innate capacity to experience the sacred and reach out in prayer?   If so, how can society nurture that capacity?   These are issues of interest to those who work in child welfare and those who educate children in religion and spirituality.

The Function of Prayer

In chapter six of this thesis findings about the perceived function of prayer were presented and analysed using the method of Grounded Theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to determine the perceived function of prayer.   The participants contributed ideas and stories from their own experience of how prayer was used and why people pray. The final finding from this chapter was expressed in an overarching category and supporting properties.   The meaning of prayer for these participants was shown in Figure 5.7:

Figure 5.7: The Function of Prayer (p. 177*)*

CATEGORY A personal way to perceive and respond to the experiences of life
PROPERTIES ---Finding help through individual connection to God
           --In challenging emotional states of
                anxiety, loneliness, fear, anger, guilt
        --Giving hope for the afterlife
        --In personal identity formation
     ---Finding social identity through communal ritual, activity and belief
     ---Finding help for others
        --Family and friends
        --In extreme circumstances of social injustice
     ---Expressing praise and thanksgiving

The function of prayer was perceived through the data as a personal activity, chosen as part of the way to relate to life experiences.   For all participants, prayer was expressed as a way to understand experiences in life and provided a way to respond to life.

- The idea of God giving life and being engaged in the experiences of life was related to the participants' use of prayer (Donin, 1980; Schaller, 1990; Tabbarah, 1988).

- The function of prayer was associated with gaining personal help.

- Help was needed in coping with the emotions arising from the difficult situations in life, the emotions of anxiety, loneliness, fear, anger or guilt were expressed by participants.

- Anxiety related to mortality and the after-life was associated with the function of prayer by participants coming from the Muslim faith tradition in particular (Raji al Faruqi, 1992b).

- The function of prayer was connected to personal identity, through association with a religious tradition for many participants.

- Some participants recognised prayer from their own idiosyncratic understanding as adding to their personal identity

- Gaining help for others was expressed as a function of prayer by many participants.   In most cases, the ones for whom prayer was prayed were close family and friends.

- Some participants used prayer to respond to world events such as disaster, poverty and war.

- Expressing praise and thanksgiving was a function of prayer for many participants. Praise and thanksgiving sometimes came from personal awareness and happiness and at other times were part of a communal ritual of prayer.

The findings in relation to the function of prayer raise some important issues in the present Australian society. If we are living in an age where the religious traditions are in decline, as stated by Fenn (2001) and Hervieu-Leger (2000), it seemed probable that the use of prayer might decline, at least in terms of public respect or acceptability. The data from this research suggested that for these participants prayer continues to be held in high regard and considered a useful part of life. Secondly if , as is proposed by Kegan (1982) and Deveson (2003), our contemporary society places children in a situation of extreme stress, then protective factors and coping mechanisms should be encouraged. Prayer, as shown from this study, is used by children as a form of coping. This presents the multicultural and multifaith society with a dilemma. Prayer in most cases is associated with religious traditions, but religious traditions form only some of the many philosophical positions valued in the Australian society. If prayer is recognized and encouraged as a positive psychological tool for wellbeing in children, it is likely that this recognition will be associated with a positive regard for faith traditions. By promoting and valuing prayer it is possible that the present orientation of society towards secularization will be diminished. The preservation of freedom of choice not associated with any form of religion, is an Australian postmodern value that could be threatened by an emphasis on the value of prayer for children.

Learning About Prayer

Analysis of data in relation to how prayer is learned was presented in chapter six of this thesis. This raised issues that have practical application for theory and practice in religious education. The final findings from chapter six were expressed in a comparative table:

Table 6.1 :
Comparison by school group - How do people learn to pray? (p. 212)

School	Catholic	Christian	Government	Independent	Jewish	Muslim
School	9	2	3	6	8	8
Church	8	5	8	6		
Mosque			1			5
Synagogue			1		7	
At home	1	2	4	4	3	3
Person	8	7	4	3	4	10
Media	1		5	5		
Other	4	9	7	7	10	9

- The data on how prayer was perceived to be learned indicated that the faith environment was of primary importance, with a possible joining of home, school and worship centre.

- The understanding was expressed that prayer was not learned in a formal sense from others, but was an inner reality, a form of instinct.

- The mass media was shown to have a teaching influence in relation to prayer, particularly for participants coming from families not belonging to a faith tradition.

- There were varying degrees of respect and awareness of different ways of prayer related to faith traditions other than the one to which the participant was associated.

There are various issues coming from these findings related to how prayer is learned which concern professionals in education and religious education. Curriculum issues relate to the difficulty in deciding between how to present knowledge about prayer and the possible experiences of prayer. For example, prayer could be presented as a meditative exercise to calm the mind, prayer could be presented as a method of discernment in decision-making or conflict resolution, or development of praise and thanksgiving could be seen as part of education for optimism and resilience. The selection of aspects of prayer for inclusion in religious education curriculum is a matter for discussion. There are also issues related to the presentation and experience of prayer from different faith traditions. Finally, in the public sector of education, the issue of educating the whole child with the aim of developing spirituality, as in the United Nations Conventions on the Rights of the Child (2004) and Delors (1996), are matters which relate to the teaching of prayer.

The combined findings related to meaning, function and the learning of prayer which have been listed above, have contributed new knowledge about children's spirituality and their use of prayer. These findings have presented new understanding about children's spirituality with implications for professionals working in student welfare and religious education.

Aspects of Theory Generated through this Research

Recommendations for Teachers of Religious Education

Recommendation One – That Prayer is Taught and Practised in Religious Education

In curriculum development, prayer should be included, both as a subject of academic study and as an experiential component. The participants viewed prayer as

part of religion, and linked it to the image of God who was connected to the good.   The experiences of prayer in the data displayed a connection between the world of the child and religious beliefs.   Prayer is therefore considered to be an aspect of the religious education program where the academic study can have personal relevance for the student.

It is also possible that some understanding of the psychological function of prayer should be included in curriculum design.   Understanding about prayer could include teaching about coping and how prayer could assist in meaning-making.   To pray means that the difficult situation is viewed in a larger context, a personal experience is placed in a world situation associated with a loving creator God.   Prayer can mean that a reflective space is created where time is given for the situation to be viewed from different perspectives.   Prayer can also mean a sense of identity and social comfort of shared belief, celebration and ritual.   Another option is an exploration of the use of intercessory prayer as related to the sense of social connection and mutual support that are considered part of the ability to cope.

Recommendation Two – That Prayer is Taught with a Multifaith Awareness

This recommendation comes from a combination of the findings of the research and the literature reviewed.   The data disclosed that participants coming from some schools did not value or respect the practice of prayer from other faith traditions.   As a matter for broad educational policy, when living in a multifaith society and world, it is recommended that a knowledge of prayer from a variety of traditions should be part of religious education (Coleman, 1999; Delors, 1996; Moran, 1989).   The multifaith awareness can also be considered part of the development of mature faith, where belief is valued in awareness of other faith and truth options (Moran, 1989).

Recommendation Three – That Pedagogy Reflect an Awareness of Children's Spirituality

The data in this study have shown that prayer is an important part of children's spirituality. Participants have shown a sense of relationship with God as well as social relationships, relationships with the environment and an awareness of their own inner life of emotions and needs. If teachers of religion are to understand that prayer is central for children, then some consideration should be given to the view that spirituality is somewhat innate and some aspects of prayer can be a natural ability for children. This has the potential to result in a style of teaching in the classroom, which will nurture spirituality. Religious education can be presented is such a way as to emphasise the personal sense of an ongoing quest with respect for the inner capacity of the child.

Recommendation Four – That Prayer be related to Ritual and Symbol

Prayer was understood by the participants to be directed towards God: the unseen, the mystery, the source of goodness or the knowing One. Difficulty was expressed by some participants as to the best way to address God. They said that a sign was needed like kneeling or bowing to show God that they were praying. Most participants used the ritual movements and gestures of their familiar faith community saying that this helped them to communicate. Similarly the use of symbols of the cross or holy objects were valued by some participants. Although prayer was explained by some participants as a simple thing to do like talking or thinking, all participants used some form of symbol or ritual when praying. This is an area where appreciation of different rituals and symbols from other faith traditions could facilitate both interfaith knowledge as well as giving other symbolic options for children to use in prayer. It was demonstrated by the data that children with little background in prayers of a faith traditions, collected symbols and aspects of ritual from different sources and used them to help express their prayers.

Recommendations for Professionals Involved in the Helping Professions Related to Resilience in Children - Teachers, Child Psychologists, Welfare Workers

Recommendation Five – That Prayer is recognized as a Coping Mechanism

One of the important most common findings from the data was that the participants perceived prayer to be a way to cope with difficult life situations. The expressions of "deep feelings", "from the heart", "from the mind", "from the soul" and "from my feelings" were used by participants to describe where the prayers came from. Offering these prayers was associated with trust in a good God who could help. The prayers about difficulties acted to reframe the situation, most participants spoke of the benefit gained through these prayers. "You feel much better", "it's good to just get it out" were common expressions when speaking of why people prayed about their difficulties.

This study provides new knowledge about prayer, children and resilience, and it is recommended that professionals involved with child welfare and public education should take this understanding into account in the appropriate contexts of their interaction with children.

The data demonstrated that prayer was able to encourage a positive appraisal when children were in challenging life situations. Especially in situations of uncontrollable stress, "when there is nothing else to do", prayer was regarded as an option, this is related to mental health research (Epperly, 2000). Many professions involved with children, such as the mass media, advertising and commercial production of toys could give consideration to fostering policies designed to respect the spiritual life and the faith life of prayer. This could be considered as part of education for resilience in the wider society.

As part of the awareness of the value of prayer, teachers, counsellors, health care workers and child care workers should also be aware of the value of the image of God for the emotional development of children.   The image of God is closely associated with the use of prayer, and this should be respected by adults interacting with children on a professional level.   To denigrate any image of God held by a child can damage an aspect of the child's life of trust and ability to cope.   The literature stated that images of God keep changing through life, and religious traditions offer valuable extensions to the child's inner view of God (Cavalletti, 1992; Elkind, 1998; Rizzuto, 1979).   However, care is needed in this development, and new ideas and images of God should be presented within a framework of respect for the image of God which already exists for the child.

Recommendation Six – That Prayer be considered an Activity with Psychological Importance

As noted in Recommendation five, prayer can be considered to be a method of coping with difficult life experiences.   The ways in which this occurs, through association with the image of God, through recognition of the negative situation, through self-talk and appraisal all can be considered part of the psychic resources of the child. Both the personal use of prayer and the joining in communal prayer could be valuable areas for research in the discipline of psychology.

The data have shown the ways in which children value prayer as one aspect of spirituality.   Prayer was an awareness of a relationship with God which was associated with other aspects of spirituality.   The participants perceived a link between praying to God and areas of personal identity formation, conflict resolution, acceptance of differences and working through difficulties.   It is proposed that the development of

spirituality as "relational consciousness" (Hay, 1998 p. 113), with prayer as a part, has value for the cognitive and psychological functioning of the child.

As has been demonstrated through the literature, contemporary decision-making has become increasingly difficult for children (Eckersley, 1988; Haggerty, 1996). To allow for a higher level of "consciousness" (Kegan, 1994; O'Murchu, 2002) new aspects of human discernment are needed The potential danger of a faith community being dogmatic about what constitutes prayer has been recognised through the discussion. This can be contrasted with the broader attitude of prayer as communication with a good, holy Presence over the whole world, which has a unitive influence. Prayer provides a possibility for reflection and awareness. The image of a creator God, who has a purpose for good, has been shown through the data of this research. A prayer connection with God as a source of wider knowledge has been valued by participants in the difficult decisions of life. It is a claim of this study that respect for and seeking after such connection through prayer could enhance many areas of the psycho-social development of children.

Recommendations for those Involved Professionally in the Development of Children's Spirituality

Recommendation Seven – That a Relationship with God through Prayer are recognized as part of Children's Spirituality
Some of the contemporary literature on spirituality emphasises relationships with the environment, with people and the spirit world in a broad way (Hart, 2003; O'Murchu, 1997). This study has demonstrated that a relationship with God is a key aspect of spirituality of value to the child. The sense of God as a being, and as a being with good intentions towards the child is shown through the data. The uncertain, mysterious image

of God was accepted by the participants, and it has been proposed that this uncertainty regarding the image of God (St. Clair, 1994) is of value in spirituality.   The uncertainty in the image of God provides a sense of cognitive dissonance that enables the image to keep developing through the various stages of the cognitive, physical and psycho-social growth of the child.   Prayer is part of the development of the image of God; the awareness of God changes and with that change the activity of prayer also changes (Elkind et al., 1968).   As prayer establishes a connection with the image of God, imagination is developed and used, leading to hope and resilience (Brueggemann, 1986b).

The obscure drawing by Rubin (Kvale 1996, p. 15) reproduced at the conclusion of this thesis (p. 252) combines the idea of transformation by Tarnas (1991) with the words of participants related to the activity of prayer.   It is proposed that the activity of prayer, where a person communicates with God, involves a situation where the person is in a dynamic relationship with the God image, and the spiritual "space" between the two becomes an area of truth, experience, knowledge and understanding for the participant. The obscurity of the drawing by Rubin is relevant to the data from this study in a variety of ways: the participants were shown to have private obscure images of God, prayer was often expressed as an obscure mystery, and the experiences in prayer were often expressed as something beyond words.   The data show that the experiences of prayer related by the participants were deep and private.   This could be linked to the title *The Secret Spiritual Life of Children,* chosen by Hart (2003) for his research.   The stories of prayer related in Hart's research, often had a private or secret quality similar to the data

on prayer in this research. Prayer was perceived by the participants as part of the inner mystery of the self in awareness of the wider relationship with the environment.

Recommendation Eight – That the Religious Community and Communal Prayer are recognized as part of Children's Spirituality

The data displayed a sense of joy in, and appreciation of, aspects of communal worship. The sense of identity connected to communities of faith, was part of the prayer experience for about two-thirds of participants. To pray together in the positive sense of praise and worship was perceived as a meaningful activity where children found a sense of identity and belonging. The community was also valued in intercessory prayer, (prayer for others), where the community of faith was identified as a resource. As care for others was expressed through prayer, children could understand a sense of unity where prayer was also available for them. The sense of identity and communal acceptance was a common experience of those participants who prayed as part of a community. While there was still a sense of the mystery of the connection with God, this sense of mystery and uncertainty was shared with others through prayer.

Limitations of this Study

As with many interview research projects with children, this study has been limited in terms of participant numbers and participant selection. As Sarantakos stated, all social research has a "real life context" (Sarantakos, 1998, p. 61), in that it presents a segment of real life which cannot be considered to represent all of life.

As stated at the outset, this study has involved children of a particular age group, that is, Year Five in primary school, which is about the age of 10 years old. Children of this age are considered immature in the areas of biological, cognitive and psychological

development (Kegan, 1982, p. 294). This study has focused on a limited age range and therefore the findings are specific to that developmental stage.

Secondly the participants in this study were all drawn from the southern area of metropolitan Melbourne. This is a largely middle-class urban area, and therefore provides a small view of the children of Australia. Children coming from rural areas, aboriginal communities, areas of high unemployment, newly-arrived immigrant communities or children with special needs, were not represented.

Finally the study was limited in the selection of participants from a limited number of schools. The schools come from the government system, the Christian, the Jewish and the Muslim faith systems. Schools established to nurture aboriginal spirituality or the Buddhist tradition form a small part of the Australian schools system, but were not included in this study.

Having noted these limitations it is valid to claim that this study has contributed new knowledge about children's spirituality related to the understanding and use of prayer. This study is significant because of its development of knowledge in the theology and psychology of prayer for children with implications for professionals who work in student welfare and religious education.

Recommendation for Verification and Extension

Other areas of research are needed to extend the findings of this study. There is need for research using different age groups to find their perceptions of the meaning and function of prayer. There is also need for a wider selection of participants from geographic locations and socio-economic situations, and further research should use participants attending schools associated with different faith traditions.

The data have shown that many of the ideas about prayer are similar among children coming from faith-oriented schools. Analysis of the content of the religious education syllabuses in the different faith-oriented schools and the associated pedagogy would complement and extend the findings of this research. Analysis of the religious education programs in relation to the degree of didactic teaching method compared to open, critical discussion, would be of value when comparing aspects of student respect for multifaith traditions.

Finally, in the psychology of religion, more research is needed into the ways in which prayer and religious education can be understood as aiding the well-being of children. Possible areas of research could include the ways in which prayer relates to personal identity formation, prayer as part of awareness of social relationships and differences, prayer as a problem solving strategy, the use of prayer as a centring exercise in the development of self-control, the link between thanks-giving and optimism, and rational decision-making using prayer.

Conclusion

This study has provided new Australian data concerning the meaning and function of prayer for children. Children educated in a variety of school systems that embraced different philosophical and faith traditions have been seen to have similar understanding and experience in relation to prayer. All participants had prayed, and all participants perceived prayer to function as an aid in life. Although it was anticipated that in a society, said to be secularised, some participants would not value prayer and would have little to say, all of the participants interviewed expressed interest, understanding and related personal stories about prayer. Most interviews lasted for more than 30 minutes,

the minimum time of any interview was 20 minutes.   In the multicultural Australian community, prayer for these children has been shown as a valued aspect of life.

All participants recognized that prayer could function as a way to cope with difficult experiences in life.   Prayer was used by participants at important times of life, and the words or thoughts in prayer helped to clarify and articulate deep feelings.   It was viewed as "a special thing you can do…walking into heaven" (CaS B3), "like telling someone you really trust" (GS G1), "Comes from the heart…you really want to get it through" (IS G1).

The personal experiences of prayer for many were seen to be associated with the community of faith of the family; for others, prayer was learnt eclectically and practised in a private individualistic manner.   Prayer functioned as an aid to living, "gives encouragement" (CC B2), "I feel a bit better if I am sad" (JS B5) "praising God …thanking God makes your life easier" (MS G4).

Eight recommendations have been generated through this research which have implications for professionals engaged in religious education and student welfare. Prayer is understood as part of children's spirituality.   This research has shown that prayer is part of the life of children and should be respected by adults who have a professional relationship with children.

**Investigating the meaning and function of prayer
for children in selected Primary Schools in Melbourne Australia-**

Figure 7.1: A visual conclusion
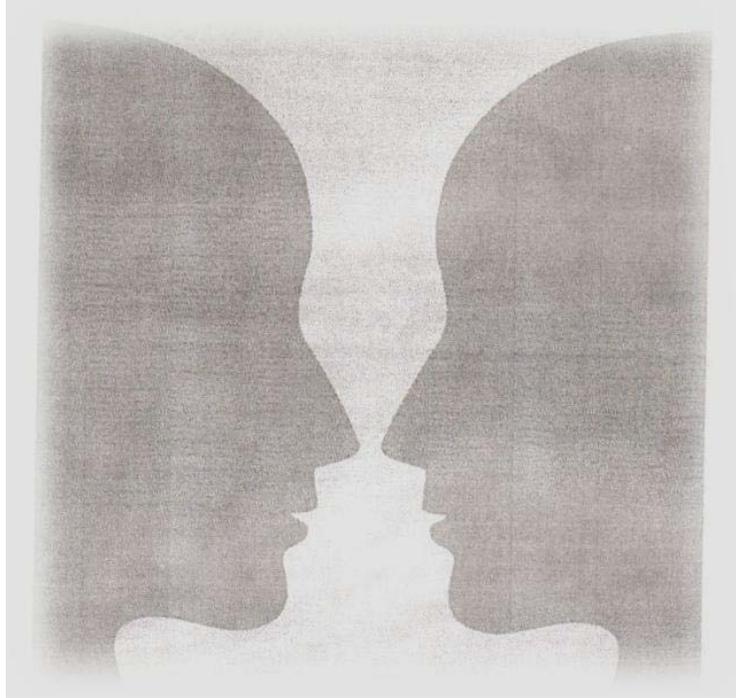
(Drawing by Rubin cited in Kvale, 1996 p.15)

The quest for knowledge must be endlessly self-revising…one is always and necessarily
engaged in reality, thereby at once transforming it while being transformed oneself"
(Tarnas, 1991, p.396)

The image by Rubin can be related to many aspects of life: in its original form it was an
example of the figure/ground phenomenon in Gestalt perception, the image was used by
Kvale to demonstrate the interview situation, the image could also be related to the
transformation experienced in the constructionist epistemology in the writing of Tarnas.

In relation to this thesis the image could be used to illustrate the meaning and function of
prayer for children– the activity of prayer creates something mysterious, new and positive
in and between the praying person and the image of God, a relational consciousness.

"Most of the people who stop praying commit suicide…stop praying…give up all hope"
(GS G5)

"People pray for religious reasons…it encourages them…puts up their confidence…they
enjoy praying" (IS B3)

1.   APPENDIX A - ETHICS - INFORMATION AND CONSENT DOCUMENTS

Title of Project : INVESTIGATING THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF PRAYER FOR CHILDREN IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN LIFE

Supervisors: PROF GRAHAM ROSSITER, DR KATH ENGEBRETSON

        Student Researcher: MRS VIVIENNE MOUNTAIN
        Post Graduate Program: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

        Information for parents and participants

This research aims to gather a wide range of ideas and opinions from primary school students regarding the meaning and use of prayer. In order to get a representative group, sixty students from a variety of schools will be interviewed. The research involves a gathering of information to help understand what children think about prayer. It is not a teaching program which would encourage any particular form of prayer. In order to collect ideas from the students, one individual interview will be conducted with each student by the Researcher (Vivienne Mountain). The interview will be conducted on the school premises within view of the school librarian. The interview will be video recorded.

It is unlikely that this interview will be difficult for the student. A comfortable setting within the library will be used. All ideas and opinions expressed by the student will be accepted and recorded.

The interviews will be conducted during school time. The class teacher has planned that the students involved will not miss any important class work. Each child taking part in the research will move from the class room to the library for the interview and following the interview return to the class room. It is estimated that the interview will last 30 minutes.

It is anticipated that the students taking part in this study will find the experience helpful in clarifying their own ideas about prayer and considering the spiritual dimension of life. It should also encourage their level of positive self-esteem, as the adult researcher will accept all of their ideas with serious consideration and respect. This area of research forms part of the wider interest in the spirituality of children. Many educators and psychologists consider spirituality to be one dimension of life which is closely linked to social and personal well-being. It is the hoped that this research study will add to the current body of knowledge and assist in curriculum development for the benefit of children. The research results will be published.

Participation in this research is completely voluntary. Parents or the student concerned are free to refuse to give consent without having to justify that decision. Consent can also be withdrawn and participation discontinued during the study at any time without giving a reason.

The students taking part in this research will be protected by a strict code of confidentiality. Students will not be able to be identified in the final report or other publications. Names of the students interviewed and the schools involved will not be published in any report.

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Student Researcher-
Mrs Vivienne Mountain
Through the ACU Tel: (03) 9953 3000
School of Religious Education
Australian Catholic University
Victoria Parade
Fitzroy 3065

In due course the results of this project will be available for participants, parents and the schools.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at the Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern about the way you have been treated during the study, or if you have any query that the Investigator or Supervisor has not been able to satisfy, you may write to the
Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee
C/o Research Services
Australian Catholic University- Melbourne campus
Locked Bag 4115
Fitzroy Vic 3065
Tel: 03 9953 3157 Fax: 03 9953 3315
Any complaint will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. The participant will be informed of the outcome.

Attached to this information letter are duplicate copies of Consent Forms. If you agree to participate in this project please sign all Consent Forms, retain one set for your records and return the other copies to the Researcher in the enclosed envelope. If your Consent Forms have not been returned within 4 days it will be assumed that you do not wish to take part in this project.

The research data collected through the interview process, are part of a post graduate degree. It is hoped that this will be a useful piece of work for the welfare of children in the area of spiritual education. Thank you for your consideration and involvement in this project.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne Mountain
(Student Researcher)

Prof Graham Rossiter
(Principal Supervisor)

Title of Project : INVESTIGATING THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF PRAYER
FOR CHILDREN IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN LIFE

Supervisors: PROF GRAHAM ROSSITER, DR KATH ENGEBRETSON

Student Researcher: MRS VIVIENNE MOUNTAIN
Program: DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Information for Participants

Dear

I am hoping that you will help me with some research. I am planning to collect ideas
from some of the children at your school and I would like you to be part of this project.

Just as you do projects at school I am doing a project through the university. My special
interest is to learn about what children think about prayer.

I will not be teaching you any new ideas, but rather I want to understand your ideas. I will
collect these ideas through an interview where we talk together. I would like to record
this interview on video-tape.

My project will be confidential, which means that I will not be using your name when I
write my report. Your ideas will be in my project but no one will know they belong to
you because your name will not be included.

I think this project is important to help teachers to teach better. One of the best ways to
do this is to listen to the ideas of children like you.

No one will force you to take part in this project, but I do hope you will. I hope you will
enjoy the interview time and the video recording. You will be joining about 60 other
students so it will not just be my project but our project.

Before we can begin the project it is important that you and your parents sign the consent
forms. These forms should then be returned to me.

I look forward to meeting you soon at your school for our interview.

Yours sincerely

Vivienne Mountain
(Student Researcher)

SAMPLE PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM ON LOCAL CAMPUS LETTERHEAD

Australian Catholic University
Brisbane Sydney Canberra Ballarat Melbourne

✚ACU National

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONSENT FORM

TITLE OF PROJECT: **INVESTIGATING THE MEANING AND FUNCTION OF PRAYER FOR CHILDREN IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN LIFE.**

STAFF SUPERVISORS: **PROF GRAHAM ROSSITER DR. KATH ENGEBRETSON**

NAME OF STUDENT RESEARCHER : **MRS VIVIENNE MOUNTAIN**

I . . . . (*the parent/guardian*) have read (*or, where appropriate*, have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Letter to the Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree that my child, nominated below, may participate in this activity, realising that I can withdraw my consent at any time. I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify my child in any way.

NAME OF PARENT/GUARDIAN: ....
(block letters)

SIGNATURE . . . .……
        DATE......................................

NAME OF CHILD   ....
(block letters)

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:

……………………………………………………
        DATE:…………………………………….
.

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER :

……………………………………………………   DATE: …………………………………

ASSENT OF PARTICIPANTS AGED UNDER 18 YEARS

I ……………………… (*the participant aged under 18 years*) understand what this research project is designed to explore. What I will be asked to do has been explained to me. I agree to take part in the project, realising that I can withdraw at any time without having to give a reason for my decision.

NAME OF PARTICIPANT AGED UNDER 18:   ....
                                                                    (block letters)

SIGNATURE . . . .
                    DATE.......................………...

SIGNATURE OF PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR:...

DATE:.…………………………………..

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER : ....

DATE:...........................………………

2. APPENDIX B -INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Introduction and statement of confidentiality

Interviewer gives some personal background for a sense of connection, children are invited to talk about their family where they live and go to school. The interview protocol owes much to the works of Kvale (1996), Elkind, Spilka and Long (1968), Coles(1990) and Hay (1998)and the method of Grounded Theory by Glaser (1992)

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this research project. You have read the letters I sent to your home. The project is about children's ideas about prayer. I am hoping you can help me with some of your ideas – I am making a big collection from lots of children – there are no right or wrong answers –

Do you know what confidential means? – it means this interview is between us – I won't be making a report for your parents or your teachers -I will be recording it so that I can remember your ideas better (look at yourself in the video screen) your name will not go in my report – I am even giving you a number instead of a name – see!! – so let's start I would like your ideas

My big question is- what do kids think about prayer?

Have you ever seen someone praying?

Can you tell me about it?

Can you draw it for me? – just a sketch it doesn't need to be perfect

Are there other ways to pray that you know about? What would that look like?

Let's put speech balloons onto our pictures/ or would they be thinking clouds?

What are they saying? Or thinking?

What else might they say?

Do people pray in special places?

I have a funny picture here – imagine this line of faces is all of the people in the world

Underneath are percentages – you have done percentages in class!? This is small number

10% 20% is more and so on up to everyone is 100%

Now looking at all of these people in the world what percentage of them would pray

regularly maybe once a week or everyday?

 -refer to the picture-
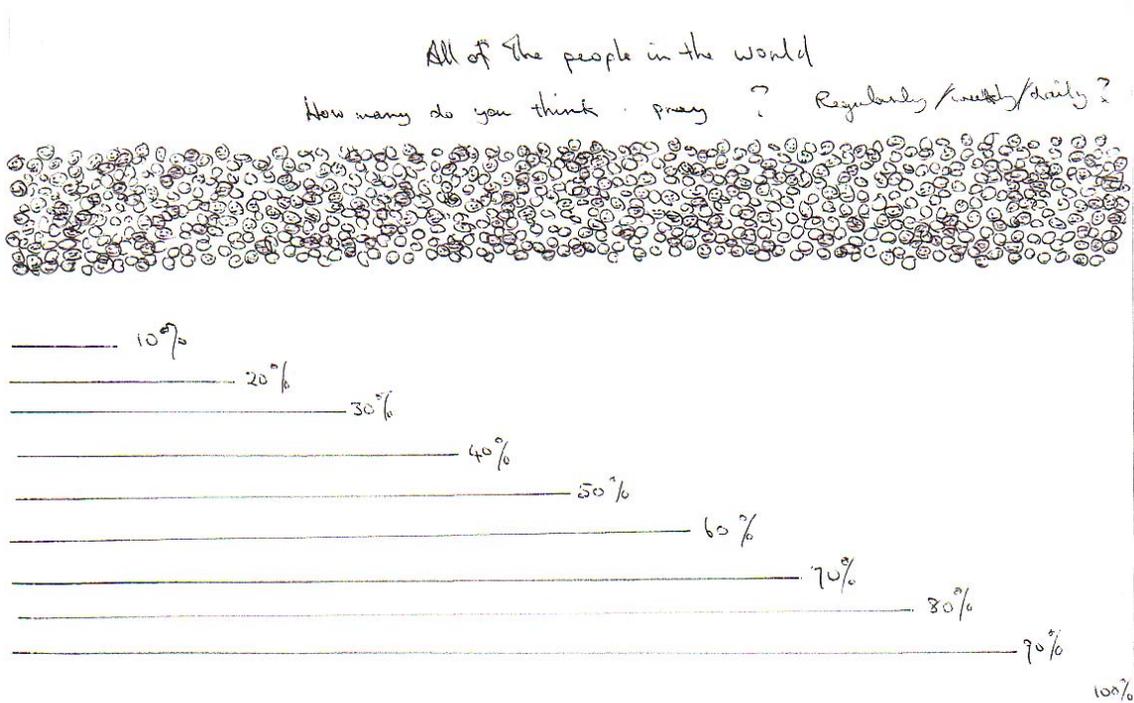
Why do you think they pray? Why do they keep doing it? What do they get out of it?

Why is it important to them?

And here on the other end …% don't pray – Does that mean they don't pray at all? Or don't pray often?

Why do you think they don't pray or don't pray so much?

How do people learn how to pray?

I watch TV and sometimes I hear people say "Oh God" or "Oh my God!" Do you think this is a kind of prayer?

What do you people do when prayers are not answered?

Has there ever been a time for you when a prayer was very powerful or important?

Where do prayers come from?

Where do they go?

These are tentative questions; using the method of Grounded Theory, the interviewer will endeavour to be open to the interests and leading of the subject. It is hoped that the ideas and experiences of the children will be expanded.

Subjects are shown cards with unfinished sentences and asked to complete them

Prayer is…

People pray because….

People don't pray because…

I would pray ……

I would not pray…….

I feel most prayerful when…..

Thank you very much for helping me with this research. Prayer is such a difficult thing to talk about you can't see it or put it in a box, but you have helped me.

Is there any other creative idea you have about prayer that I could include in my study?

3. APPENDIX C - OBSERVATION NOTES

Teaching time and participation in prayer

CaS

- Daily School Assembly concluded with prayer
- Whole school weekly Para-Liturgy Worship Service in the Church with some student leadership
- Class room prayers at the end of each school day – some extempore
- Thirty minute Religious Education classes – four per week
- Whole school and family Worship Service – twice per term

CS

- Whole school Worship Service conducted each morning -15 minutes
- Class room prayers each day – extempore – student-led
- Thirty minute Christian Education classes – two per week

GS

- Thirty minute non-compulsory Christian Religious Education class – weekly

IS

- Weekly school Assembly usually concluded with a prayer
- Year level thirty minute Chapel Service fortnightly
- No formal Religious Education classes

JS

- Daily Morning Prayer Service - 45 minutes (Hebrew)
- Daily class room prayer
- Monthly assembly including prayer
- Roughly one third of the curriculum time is devoted to Jewish studies including religion

MS

- Daily School Assembly concluded with prayer
- Daily mid-day Prayer Service – 35 minutes (Arabic)
- Roughly one third of the curriculum time is devoted to Islamic studies including religion

Observations

Catholic School

This school is a parish school with the buildings situated at the rear and to the side of the Church. There is a large cross above the entrance to the main school building and symbols of the Christian faith are evident in other sections of the school. In the class 5 room there was a display of two Bibles, two candles and a plain wooden cross. A modern crucifix was mounted on the wall above the white board.

The daily assembly opens with "Good morning and may God bless you" and concludes with a prayer, this is led by the Principal. Each week there is a whole school Para-Liturgy Worship Service involving the parish Priest and some student leadership. The class receives four 30 minutes Religious Education lessons each week and short class room prayers are held at the end of each school day. Some prayers are from the liturgy some extempore. The whole school joins in a family Worship Service twice per term.

Christian School

Observation

This school is representative of a relatively new network of low fee-paying, parent - controlled schools around Melbourne. The mission statement of the school states the aim to "assist students in acknowledging the Lordship of Jesus Christ, to become good citizens in learning, integrity and vision." The school site is shared with the Sunday Worship Centre. The church Pastor takes an active role in the school, conducting a short worship time each morning for the whole school. In addition each class teacher leads a daily devotional time of Bible reading and prayer. At the Year Five level prayer in the class room is a voluntary activity, the teacher prays and usually eight or nine students

pray. The class rooms are bright and colorful with displays of children's art work. Some work on display in the Year Five class room showed cut and paste pictures of fruit in a basket with each fruit identified by name as "The Fruit of the Spirit". There were no obvious symbols of faith visible in the room but all rooms accessed onto a large communal space. This was a multipurpose worship area with a large cross visible. The Year Five class receives two thirty minute formal classes of Religious Education each week.

Government School

Observations

In the busy and attractive working space of Year Five no obvious religious symbols were present. As a Government school with the legal status of "secular" religion is not taught by the class room teacher. Weekly school assemblies are conducted without prayer. Some Religious Education is available. A volunteer teacher comes into the class each week to conduct one thirty minute lesson of Christian Religious Education. This is not compulsory and three children from the class do not attend. Another non-compulsory opportunity for religious experience is given at Christmas when the whole school walks to a local church for a thirty minute Worship Service. This involves the local Minister and has student involvement.

Independent School

Observations

This school has a founding connection with a Protestant Church. The prospectus does not name the tradition of origin but rather speaks of the focus as on "Academic Education shaped by strong Christian community values". Further in small type is the comment that

the students learn to "appreciate the richness and fulfillment that the Christian tradition brings to their spiritual awareness and moral values". There are no formal classes in Religious Education given during Year Five but students all go to a fortnightly half hour chapel service led by an ordained Chaplain. The class room had no obvious religious symbols. Curriculum poster displayed in the class room made mention of "responsibilities" and "rights" and "philosophy and logic".

Jewish School

Observations

This is an Orthodox Jewish school. One third of the curriculum time is given to formal Jewish studies, involving history, language and religious studies. The class room was remarkable in that all of the displays of written work showed the Hebrew language. Various time lines of Jewish history and posters of Israel were also prominent. Students were very keen to discuss and interpret the displays.

As part of the normal school day a morning, prayer time was observed. This was held in a multi-purpose room. When the chairs were facing one direction the room was a performance space, when the chairs were turned in the opposite direction there was an appropriately decorated Arc and small Bema for worship. The Prayer Service lasted 35 minutes with a variety of forms of involvement by the students through singing, movement and spoken words. All of the prayer time was in Hebrew. There was male leadership and a screen separating boys and girls. All students carried and followed a prayer book.

The interviews were a lively experience of interaction and positive enthusiasm. Subjects

engaged willingly in trying to explain to the interviewer their depth of understanding and

experience of prayer.

The following glossary of Jewish terms was compiled to assist in understanding the

interview videos. These words were used by the subject in a natural way within the

English conversation:

Bracha = praise/blessing, portion of prayer
Daven = to pray
Hashem = God
Hazan = leading the service
Kipa = head covering worn by males
Leyn = the act of individually reading the Torah in worship
Masa Tovim = collection of good deeds
Mitzvah = good deed
Mitzvot = good deeds
Parasha = portion of the Torah
Parsook = sentence within the Parasha
Rav = Torah Scholar
Refuha Shlemah = prayers for healing
Shabat = Sabbath
Shema = call to prayer ("Hear O Israel, the Lord our God is one")
Siddur = prayer book
Simhat Torah = Festival of the last day of reading the Torah – end of the yearly cycle
Tallit = prayer shawl
Tefellin = small portion of Torah worn on the forehead and forearm
Tefillah = prayer meeting
Yom Kippur = the Day of Atonement

Muslim School

Observations

This is a modern attractive school opened in 1992. The school prospectus says the school

"takes pride in building up a generation full of FAITH in Allah, to derive knowledge

from HIM and to put that knowledge into practice, which could flow over and shine for

others". On entering the class room Mathematics and English posters were evident and

there were numerous displays of children's Art exhibited in the class rooms and corridors. The class room teacher informed me that Islamic studies and worship activities were an addition to the program provided by her, and were conducted by the Imam. Islamic studies comprised about one third of the curriculum time. There were no obvious religious symbols in the class room except for Islamic words left on the white board from a previous lesson.

Students at this school attend whole school assembly every morning in the area outside of the mosque. This assembly is concluded with prayer. Each day there is also the normal Islamic mid day prayer conducted in the Mosque (a class room adapted for the purpose). This is held in two parts, Primary School and Secondary School. The Imam leads the senior students and sometimes a senior boy will lead the Primary School worship. Girls and boys are seated in separate areas of the Mosque. The mosque is a large room without furniture. Some posters produced by primary and secondary students decorate the walls. Shoes are left on a covered outdoor verandah and a small entrance area has a tap for ablutions.

The students interviewed at this school all came from grade 6. All were English as a Second Language students, one girl was a first phase learner and the other subjects were second phase learners. All of the students exhibited a co-operative manner, lively interest and extensive knowledge of prayer from the Islamic tradition.

Glossary of terms used in the interviews

Allahu Akbar = God is great
Doonya = temporary (as in the temporary nature of this worldly life)

Du'a = own private prayers
Juma = prayer on Friday
Hijab = lose clothing of women covering hair, arms, legs and feet
Imam= Muslim (religious) leader
Janna = Heaven
Kaba = the original is in Mecca but the word is also used for a small representation of that stone used as a direction pointer in a Mosque
Mosque = worship centre
Niya = Intention
Raka = cycle of prayer with ritual movements and words
Suras = verses from the Q'ran
Wudou= ablutions/ washing ritual before prayer

4.	APPENDIX D - ILLUSTRATIONS OF PARTICIPANTS

CaS B1

CaS B2

Illustration
by the Interviewer
directed by the subject
who was severly physically
disabled.

CaS B3

CaS B4

dear God.
    Pleas help to stop war
between Iraq and the U.S.

CaS B5

I hope .....
.....
Hail Mary for Some
Goodbye

praying
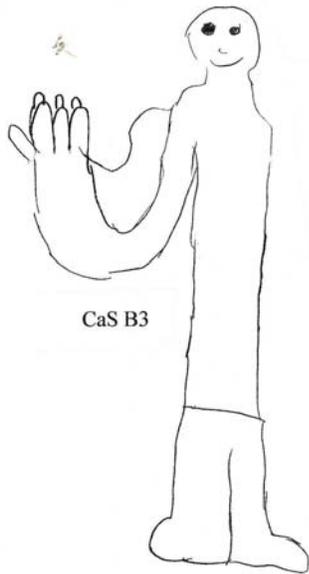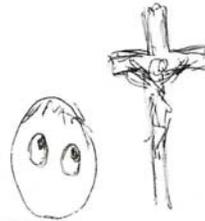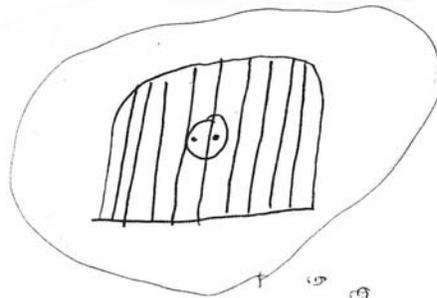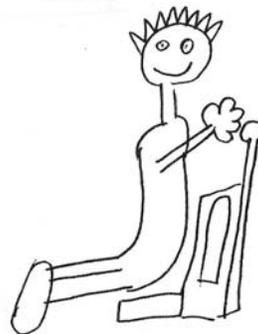
CaS G1
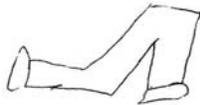
eyes open
and
Closed

CaS G2
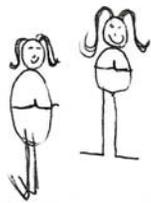
CaS G3

CaS G4

CaS G5

CS B1

CS B2

CS B3

Standing up

Sitting down

CS B4

lying down in bed.

CS B5

CS G1

CS G2

CS G3

in bed

Praise you lord

Shadda da da

thank you lord
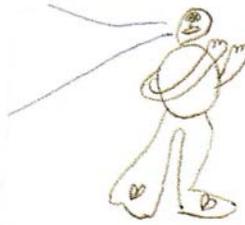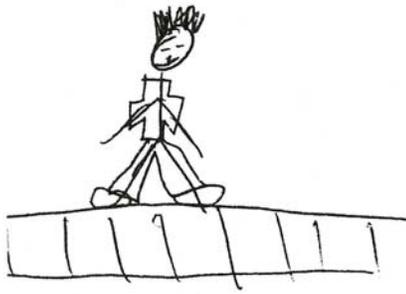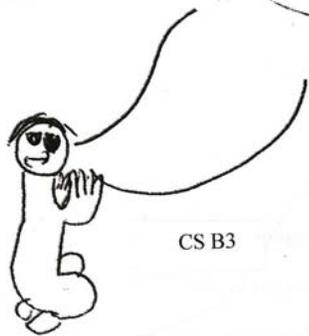
CS G4

CS G5

Please God, help through this axam it means alot to may me, thank You

a man
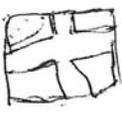
GS B1

"Jewish way" on a mat

GS B2

GS B3
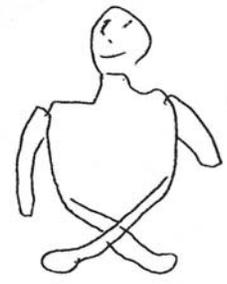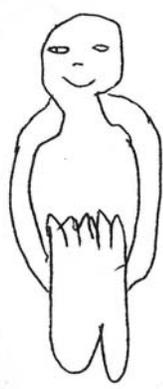
GS B4
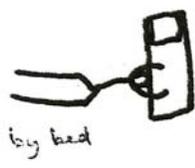
by bed

in church

GS B5

GS G1

GS G2

GS G3

GS G4

GS G5

IS B1

bend nees
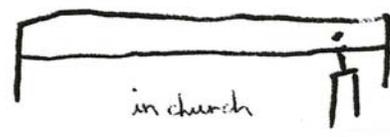
IS B2

IS B3

in church
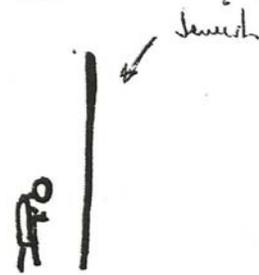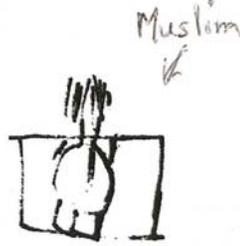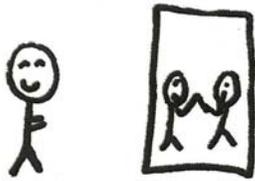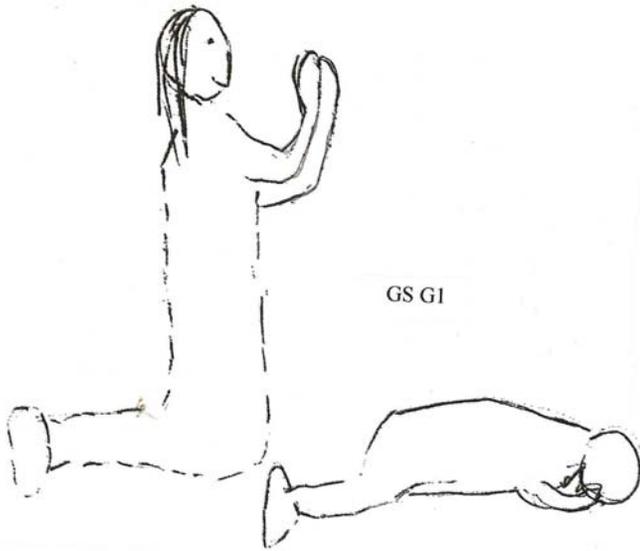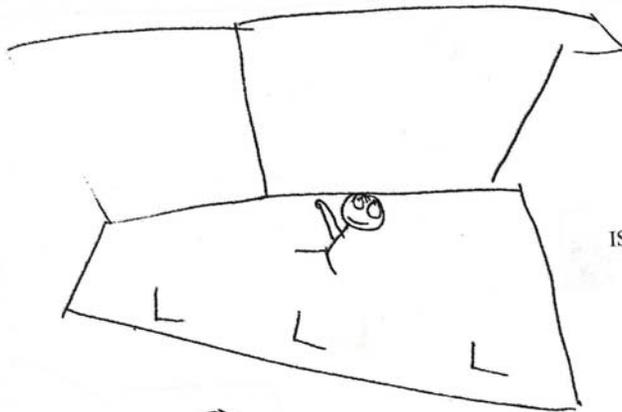
eyes shut.

IS B4

IS B5
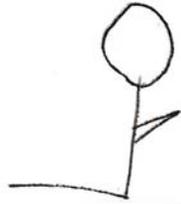
IS G1
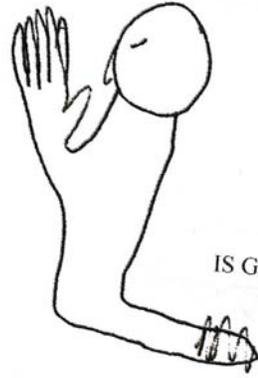
IS G2

IS G3

IS G4
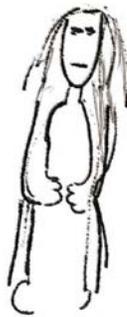
IS G5

JS B1

JS B2

JS B3

JS B4
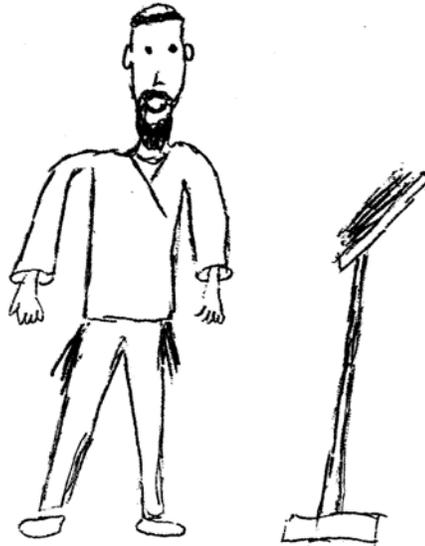
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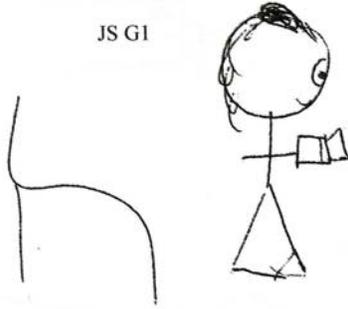
JS G2

JS G3
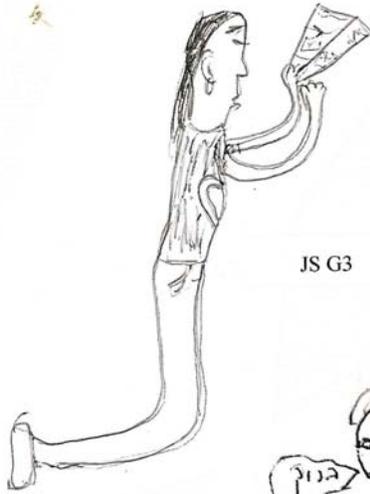
JS G4

JS G5

MS B1
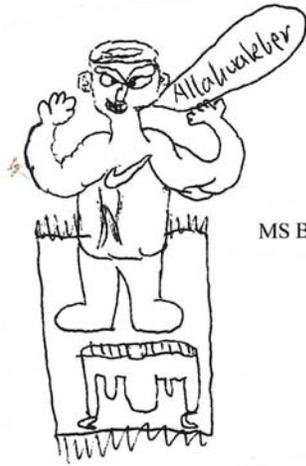
MS B2

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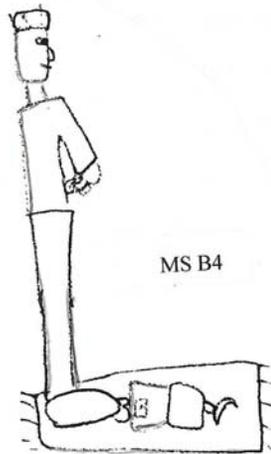
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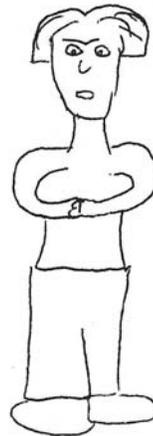
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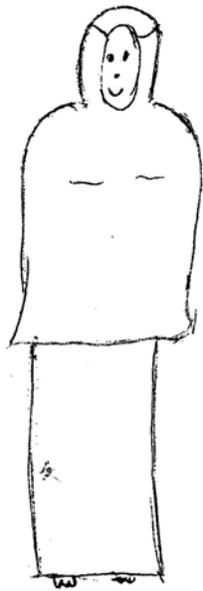
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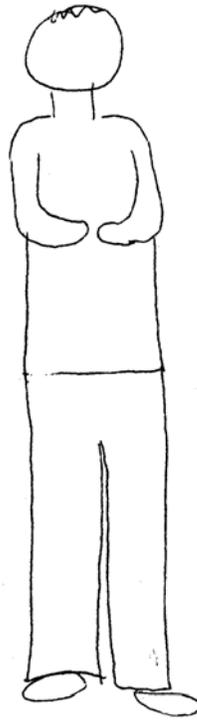
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MS G4
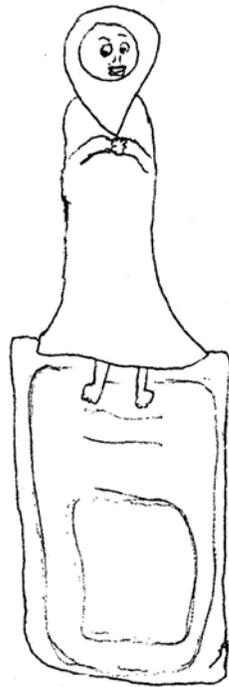
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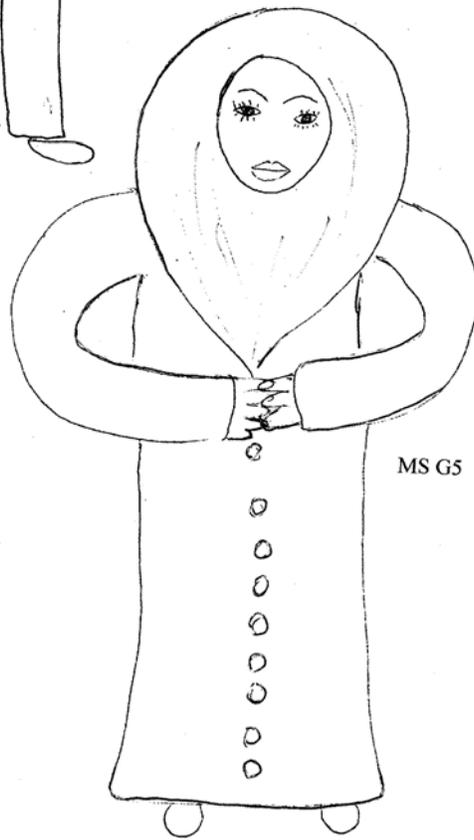
MS G5

5. APPENDIX E - ESTIMATION OF PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE WHO PRAY IN THE WORLD

CaS

|	Regularly Weekly/daily	Sometimes	Never
G1	50%	40%	10%
G2	65%	30%	5%
G3	50%	30%	20%
G4	75%	25%	-
G5	45%	15%	20%
B1	80%	20%	-
B2	90%	10%	-
B3	70%	30%	-
B4	50%	20%	10%
B5	60%	20%	29%

CS

	Regularly-Weekly/ Daily	Sometimes	Never
G1	40%		
G2	50%		
G3	50%		
G4	40%	40% other religions	40%
G5	35%		50%
B1	50%		35%
B2	50%		
B3	75%	Prayer to "other Gods"	15%
B4	60%		
B5	60%		

GS

	Regularly-Weekly /Daily	Sometimes	Never
G1	60 %		
G2	70-80%		
G3	75%		
G4	50-60%		
G5	60%		
B1	70%		
B2	40%		
B3	30-40%		
B4	60%		
B5	50-60%		

IS

	Regularly-Weekly/ Daily	Sometimes	Never
G1	40-50%		10%
G2	55%		20%
G3	50-60%		10%
G4	30%very religious	Occasionally- not very religious	10%
G5	50%		50%
B1	60%		-
B2	20% in Australian 75%in Afghanistan	50%	
B3	45%		25%
B4	30%	Once a month or sometime	-
B5	40%		20%

JS

	Regularly-Daily	Weekly	Sometimes	Never
G1	40%	20%	35%	5%
G2	25%		"every person at least once in their whole life would pray at least once"	10%
G3	40%		"Christmas and Holy Days"	5% "we don't need anything"
G4	40%	30%	"probably everyone pray at least once"	5%
G5	30%	40%	20%	
B1	60-70% "if they are all Jewish"		"not sure – I know Muslims pray a lot"	
B2	20-30%	50-60%		
B3	40%	50%	20% "Celebration days"	
B4	45%			20% "extremely poor – don't know what God is"
B5	40-50%		"All the world would pray once a week"	

MS

	Regularly-Daily	Weekly	Sometimes	Never
G1	70-80%			
G2	70-80%			
G3	30-40%			10-15% "don't have religion"
G4	"A bit less than half"			"Might be a few"
G5	30%			10%
B1	40%			"might be a few"
B2	70%			10%
B3	30-40%	75%		"Maybe some who say they have no religion" 3-5%
B4	50%			10% "lazy or sleepy"
B5	50%			30-40% "Might say God is not real"

6. APPENDIX F - A TIME WHEN PRAYER WAS VERY SPECIAL OR POWERFUL

Where there was no immediate response a " –" is placed in the response.

Expression of a prayerful moment from the written part of the Protocol are recorded after the dash. Students' responses are 1-5 in each section.

Catholic school

Girls:

Death of my dog, made a funeral

Grandfather's Death

Illness of grandmother

Reconciliation ritual/prayer in church for the Bali disaster

Friendship problem

Boys:

Help to find something lost

Needed something/ someone to help me

Prayer in church for Bali

When very little, my first prayer

Family friends didn't have enough money

Christian School

Girls:

Situation at school, fighting

Auntie had breast cancer/when the Pastor prays for me

When mum was really sick

- not really- when a family member is sick

On my ninth birthday

Boys:

When I prayed for Jesus to come into my heart

When I saw an angel (5 years old)

When I gave my heart to Jesus

When my dog ran away

When my grandfather died/when Mum and dad have a fight

Government School

Girls:

Grandfather in hospital, heart attack

- don't know, when upset

When my dog died

Fear of war in Iraq

Asking for hope

Boys:

-not sure, when sad

In bed at night

Mum was sick in hospital

Mum was sick in hospital

To get better/to talk to my Pa (passed on a few years back)

Independent School

Girls:

At a funeral

When my dog died

- not really, when really sad

Prayed for my grandfather, when he died

- don't think so

Boys:

- not really, Bali bombing

When my sister was born

When I sliced my tongue in half- helped me relax

When mum had cancer, prayed every day and night

At a wedding

Jewish School

Girls:

It's really good on Saturday, with all of your friends

I guess it will be special when I turn 12, Bat mitzvah

At my Bar mitzvah lesson, I felt, O my God, that is so powerful

On Saturday when we go into synagogue for a longer time

- not so sure, when I am happy

Boys :

Not yet, but it will come at my Bar mitzvah

- don't really know - in the morning

When my grandmother broke her hand

When I was in hospital – the Rabbi came to visit and prayed

Sometimes when I am Hazam (leading the worship)

Muslim School

Girls:

Probably the morning prayer, my soul…God has cleaned it in the night

End of Ramadan, special prayer, end of fasting

At the end of fasting

In a mosque- after fasting is very special for me

On Friday afternoon, gives you blessing, to your family, for yourself

Boys:

When I was lucky enough to go to the holy Kaba, felt so strong inside

Prayed for my grandfather

Last year, I prayed before the end of year Islamic test

When my dad told me to pray, if you pray you go to Jenna

End of Ramadan in the Mosque, your feelings go to you, you have to pray

7. APPENDIX G- THE MEANING OF PRAYER – SENTENCE EXERCISE

Table G.1
Catholic school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	Prayer is…
G1	something that comes from your heart…it goes to God and gets passed on
G2	When you talk to God or Jesus
G3	when you talk to God or other saints
G4	talking to God expressing feelings or tell God something
G5	when you talk to God
B1	When you think of God for your loved ones to protect them or to find things
B2	to tell God things, all the things that happen in your life…like and don't like
B3	a special thing you can do
B4	When you're sitting down, no one's talking, you're saying something to God…can be listening and in your head
B5	a thought message sent from a human or thing…sent to God…not only one way

Table G.2
Christian school- participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	Prayer is…
G1	a personal conversation between you and God, you can confess your sins and you won't be ashamed because only God hears
G2	When somebody helps you as they pray for you
G3	important…very helpful because the Lord always answers
G4	talking to God…in tongues…like a weird language
G5	talking to God…asking and thanking
B1	thinking from your heart to pray for people
B2	asking for things you need or for people
B3	a good time to talk to Jesus and to let every thing bad out in you to someone you can trust
B4	knowing God
B5	a worship form of speech to God…a way of talking to Him

Table G.3
Government school- Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	Prayer is…
G1	something that somebody hopes and wishes for to a special person that they can trust…God
G2	To ask for help
G3	helpful…like if you are really sad…like twin towers and Bali…you mightn't know where your family is
G4	someone's pleas to God …asking for solutions to their problems
G5	a thing that people use for hope and thoughts
B1	believing in something by the name of God
B2	believing in God hoping that all your sickness and stuff will be better
B3	something that most people do and religious people do more
B4	a message that helps you go to God
B5	When you wish to get healthy or thank God for what he has gaven (sic) you

Table G.4
Independent School- Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	Prayer is…
G1	something that you tell God
G2	A different kind of language that comes from your heart and is sent to God
G3	hoping something will change or keep happening
G4	A religious act showing that you care
G5	A message you tell God...asking and thanking
B1	people communicating with God
B2	A few words that people say to express their feelings
B3	spoken words . . . special words with amen
B4	something you do to help people get better
B5	A group of sentences of how you want someone to know about you or how you want someone to be

Table G.5
Jewish school- Participants' responses to the unfinished sentences:

Participant code	Prayer is…
G1	thanks to God and asking him for more things
G2	a thing where you communicate with God…tell him how you feel and thank him or ask for forgiveness
G3	a group of words with a strong meaning talking to God…asking him things and telling him things
G4	saying thank you and asking for things to God
G5	trying to speak to your God
B1	a way of saying thank you to God for what He has done for us
B2	something you're saying to the God…sorry...thank you...a way of communicating with their God
B3	a connection with Hashem…to grant you what you need and where you are going in the future
B4	a way people express their feelings to their ruler
B5	you talking to your God …Hashem

Table G.6
Muslim school- Participants' responses to the unfinished sentences:

Participant code	Prayer is…
G1	a part of our religion…a very important part of Islam…to worship God…respect God
G2	important…in every religion prayer is different…in Islam prayer is communicating to Allah and thanking Him
G3	praising Allah…getting all of the good deeds from Him…every Muslim should pray…have(sic) to pray
G4	like a really good thing to respect God
G5	something you're saying for your God…God has ordered you to pray
B1	one of the most important pillars of religion that keeps your faith strong…a connection between you and the Lord
B2	important for every religion…is a holy thing for everyone
B3	the way we communicate to God
B4	good…because it's really cool to do…you get to go to Jenna (heaven)
B5	something important you have to do for God

8.   APPENDIX H- THE FUNCTION OF PRAYER – SENTENCE EXERCISE

Table H:1
Catholic school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	People pray because…	I feel most prayerful when…
G1	They feel sorry…to tell God and say "hello	When someone has "passed on"
G2	They are feeling something and they want to get it out	At church when I am feeling really sad
G3	They are like Catholic…they would like something…thanking	Something good happens or when I go to church
G4	To express their feelings…tell God something…ask him to look after someone	When last year September 11^5…there is a girl with Down's Syndrome, her helper died
G5	They want something or they want to talk to God	When I am in church
B1	They need help	When my prayers get answered
B2	They believe in God…know God will help them if he can	I want to say a good prayer in church…before I go to sleep
B3	Sometimes they might feel bad …(or) feel good and thank God	I am in church
B4	They could be upset…say sorry to God	When I am happy
B5	To help themselves…other people…give thanks and praise…to stop people's selfishness…for power to be shared	Big things…friends are sick…family friends don't have enough money

TableH:2
Christian school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	People pray because…	I feel most prayerful when…
G1	They might feel depressed or lonely	You are about to do a race…ask for courage and not give up
G2	They need help…want Jesus to save them so they can become Christian	When the Pastor prays for you
G3	Nobody else can help them and they need somebody so they pray to the Lord	When somebody is really hurt and when I am at church on Sunday
G4	They want help…asking for protection…thanking god…asking for forgiveness	When my family member is sick or something…for dad's business
G5	They need God's love…they need help	When we are in praise and worship…or when a miracle happens
B1	They want God to answer and they know God will answer one day and they will be very happy when He does	when some of my prayers have been answered and I can thank God and show Him that I love Him a lot and want to do what He wants me to do
B2	They need encouragement and someone to talk to	In the mornings, pray to have a good day…at night, good sleep, refreshed
B3	They have needs…that if they don't fix them with Jesus they will get worse and worse and their spirit dies	I am in church, nothing to distract me, I can pray easily
B4	They want to feel that God is in their heart and they want to talk to Him	When something has happened in my life…something significant that I would know God would do for you
B5	Because they have faith in Jesus Christ and believe He will answer prayers…believe and trust Him	I am in church on Friday and on Sunday…everyone is worshipping and I feel good that I believe in a mighty God

Table H:3
Government school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	People pray because…	I feel most prayerful when…
G1	They feel either good or bad about something and want someone to hear their suggestions…because they trust them	My mum yells at me…when someone dies…my pet dies
G2	They might want something or need help	I am upset or I really really want something
G3	It helps them	When everything bad happens
G4	Because of the different feelings: happy, sad and angry	When the world is in war, I try to help them…right now in Afghanistan and Iraq
G5	For hope	Thinking of others
B1	They wish to do well in something	When I am sad
B2	They want their lives to be better	I am in bed at night
B3	They might have problems in their lives	Like when my mum's in hospital…or dad's friend in hospital
B4	Of a matter in their lives and they want God to fix it	Probably when a family member dies
B5	They think God is listening and watching over them	When I am in bed and a bit sad about something

TableH:4
Independent school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	People pray because…	I feel most prayerful when…
G1	They need something…and thank him…maybe say sorry	At a funeral
G2	They might have a problem or just want to say something	I have a problem
G3	They feel it might help them	Not sure…when really sad
G4	They are troubled or someone they know is troubled	In a church
G5	They believe God will do something for them…or if they don't (pray) they think God might be angry	-not
B1	They are upset…they want something set right or they are angry	If I was upset or in trouble, I would pray and say I didn't mean it…if (someone in the) family died…Bali bombing
B2	Special occasions, Christmas and Easter, saying thank you…feeling they are sad,(if) country's in trouble	You see kids mental or have no arms or have diseases, thanks that I was born normal
B3	For religious reasons…it encourages them…puts up their confidence…they enjoy praying	Sad…angry…hurt
B4	Their friends are in a critical condition…very bad like hurt	When mum was sick…when friends are sick
B5	For their religion…some find it rewarding, they want to tell someone but don't know who so they just tell God	When you are sad…being bullied and just can't do anything

Table H:5
Jewish school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	People pray because…	I feel most prayerful when…
G1	If you pray you get better things…food, clothes…God will look after you and helps you	When I am at Synagogue, holy day of the week…makes you feel better (but not for the whole time 9.00 am-12.00 noon)
G2	It's part of their religion…helps them know more about who they are as Jewish	When I do it quietly to myself…it gives me a good feeling, thinking that you are really next to God and talking to Him
G3	It gives them spiritual meaning…feel good about themselves because they have done it…emotional meaning and contentment	I am at Bat mitzvah lesson
G4	They want to either talk to god or they could just do it because the family does	I stay in synagogue longer
G5	If they want something they might get it… because everybody else is	I am happy
B1	They appreciate everything God has done for us and want Him to do more for us	At the age of 13…when I am feeling sad I go upstairs to my bedroom and pray it usually makes me feel better
B2	They want to ask God for something, it's a "mitzvah" thing to do (good deed)	In the morning once I have woken up
B3	Symbolizes their own religion…to make God aware that we believe	When I am praying my heart out and I think God hears me…some days when I am not tired and I need to do it…my grandmother broke her hand the other day
B4	They feel they need to…they can get what they want… it's just good manners	I actually need the prayer…it's doing something for me…like when I was in hospital having my appendix out…the Rabbi came to see me and prayed…I felt I was actually praying properly as part of the community
B5	They want to thank God for food, life, being able to do things…show some respect	When I want to express things, like if I am in a bad mood, calms me down

Table H:6
Muslim school -Participants' responses to the unfinished sentence:

Participant code	People pray because…	I feel most prayerful when…
G1	It's part of their religion…a very important part of Islam…to worship god…respect God	The time has come (5 times a day) we hear the Azan we want to pray
G2	They want to please God …thank God	In a group with other Muslims
G3	The praise God…to get good deeds…the angels on your shoulders they write all of the deeds, right good, left bad, at the judgment the books are weighed for heaven or hell	When you are fasting especially at eh end…it's good to pray at that time…only the really really good Muslims see a special light, then whatever you want will come true
G4	They want to thank their God, keeping them well and helping them out	Whenever I am happy and feel thankful…if a family member was sick and got well
G5	They feel like praying…do what God has asked	When my mum's sick…parents sick…when I have exams
B1	It brings them closer to God…gives feeling of contentment	When in the holy city (Mecca)
B2	They want to get good deeds from their God…go to heaven…escape hell fires	When my grandpa was very ill
B3	God told us to…we can have connection with God	When I know that God has accepted my prayers…if I ask for something and it happens
B4	To worship God…to listen to Him and to thank Him	When I get back from school…when I read the Qu'ran…nearly every day one page with my dad
B5	God said to them…to test them to see if they believe in God or not	When it's Eide (end of Ramadan) you go to the Mosque…like your feelings go to you and you have to pray

9.   APPENDIX I - A PERSONAL POST SCRIPT

This research journey has been a personal challenge and joy as well as an academic exercise.   The reflections in this personal post script are a collection of my observation memos.   I hope it might prove to balance some of the academic writing of this thesis by providing a human "face" to the process.   I also hope that it might serve as an encouragement to other researcher starting on the task.   Overall this research task has been great joy but areas of anxiety were real.   The choice of a supervising body, topic of study and method all took more time than I anticipated.   These were general frustrations of decision-making, of investigating options, narrowing the wide range of interest and defining a topic.   However, the greatest challenges came from managing the emotions involved in the data collection, analysis and presentation.

As acknowledged in the thesis my background was from the Christian tradition with a considerable experience in multifaith dialogue.   This was useful when approaching the different schools to prepare for the interview times, however, aspects of this close interaction were not always comfortable or easy.

When planning to enter the different schools I experienced a surprisingly strong sense of resistance to the clothing expectations. For a start I had a degree of anxiety as the schools were disturbing their routine to help my project, so I wanted to make sure that I did not cause any additional difficulty or offence.   Following their dress code was a seemingly small matter.   However, my wardrobe was limited and for a period of seven days in each school, I would need a few changes of clothes.   Secondly, the weather was hot.   For the Muslim school I had summer pants suits but all had short sleeves. For the Jewish school only two skirts were long enough to appear suitable in the school but I

considered these more appropriate for evening wear. The headscarf was the most difficult feature. After experimenting to try to make the scarf secure, I sought advice from a female staff member. The scarf was an ongoing difficulty during the interview time; the slippery material allowed the front of my hair to escape. I was also conscious of the headscarf being a barrier to the clarity of hearing and easy communication in the interviews. This was a practical problem as when speaking to young people I am often conscious of straining to catch every word.

On the other hand there was great joy in being in the different school environments. Each classroom was a little world of active engagement; brightly colored posters, student movement, noise and excitement and the smells of young life packed together. There were superficial differences of school uniform and visual displays but the human experience was comfortingly the same. When observing the class room activity there was the familiar mix of personalities, the one with the open smile for the visitor, the quiet worker, the relentless questioner, the intense buddies and the one who was always watching for the opportunity to fall off his chair and cause some fun. Similarly in the playground the school differences were insignificant and I was impressed each time with the wonder of the variety of human life and interaction possibilities coming from different cultures and faith traditions.

During the individual interview sessions this same awareness of wonder continued. There was anxiety that I should not influence or unduly lead the thoughts of the children, but as each child told their stories and shared their ideas I was aware of the strength of their individual life force and experience. Some were more quiet and reserved in their manner of expression, some interviews lasted a shorter time, but each

one was unique and seemed like a little window and I was being given permission to look in.   As I have reviewed the interview videos I have constantly been aware of this same feeling of privilege as an interviewer.   To share in the lives of sixty children on such a deep level of thinking and belief has been an honor.

The analysis was an area of anxiety.   In my mind was the image of the great quest for objectivity.   Using qualitative methodology I was defensive towards my "quantitative colleagues", I felt the need to be extra diligent to make sure this more subjective method was used with every precaution possible.   There was a conscious image of "bracketing" my own assumptions and beliefs.   The desire that my work should be an honest reflection of the ideas of the children seemed a heavy responsibility.   My confidence lay in the process of constant comparison using the established method of Grounded Theory .   As I continuously reviewed the videos the voices of the children kept speaking and the use of supervisors and many colleagues reassured me that I was not leading, or forcing the data.   It was a long and tedious process but I was convinced that this was the heart of the research.

Some areas of data did not sit comfortably with my own beliefs.   As I recognised my own reaction I needed to take further time to make sure the words of the children were faithfully reported, not minimised nor exaggerated.   One example of this was the finding from the Muslim girls that they would not pray when menstruating.   In this case I recognised my negative reaction, went back and rechecked the actual words.   This section of the data received additional analysis time in order to overcome my resistance and present the data in an honest manner.

With the great mass of rich data a worthy presentation became a further concern. Initially I wanted to present my finding in video form so as to capture the vitality of the experiences and ideas of the participants.   It was my belief that a video would be a useful ongoing tool in pre-service and in-service education for religious education teachers.   I was concerned to raise the awareness of teachers that children have valuable thoughts of their own about prayer.   However, the ethical requirements involved in making such a compilation of the ideas from the participants finally forced me to give up this idea.   So I was left with the requirements of 80,000 words of strict academic text in which to capture and present such wild and diverse beauty.   This has been the hardest part of the project. The strict rules, the qualification of every word and the constant choice of careful, cautious explanation have been a steep learning path.   It has given a taste of a world away from feeling, a world of precise measurement, it still seems a rather strange new world for me.

So I come to the end.   There is great satisfaction in completing a task, so much of life is open-ended, but this piece of research investigating the meaning and function of prayer for a select group of children in contemporary Australia has been done.   I have learnt much of myself through the task.   I have worked to control feelings and enthusiasm.   I started this work with an established appreciation of the life of the child but this has been extended and strengthened.   The deep wisdom and spirituality of children shines through their words.   I would like to conclude with a selection of my favorite lively quotations from the data.   Although the major research task has been to discover the common categories and properties within the data, truth is also in the off-

beat and unusual pieces of data.   These are little treasures and this work would be

incomplete if a record of these quotations was not included.

So I conclude with a celebration of the perceptions of children.   Their creative

expression, spirituality and faith continue to speak to me.   When teaching I sometimes

think I should "take off my shoes" as I am "standing on holy ground".

Prayer is…
"like telling someone you really trust" – GSG1
"A lot of bad things happen (when they pray)… feels like they are not alone" GSG3
"believe that something can happen…even though things are bad" GSG5
"walking into heaven…A special thing you can do" CaSB3
"like talking to one of your friends" CaS G5
"You can't hear his voice, but sometimes you can just sort of know he is doing something."
"You feel joyful inside" CC B1
"One night I saw an angel…(I was) in grade 3…I saw it in the back yard…I was with my sister…I saw the heavens come…and an angel came down…the angel said to me 'May there be peace, joy and mercy on this house…we went inside and started to pray to Jesus". CC B2
"pray in groups…in a circle holding hands…"could be someone in the middle…people put their hands on them…if they are sick" CC B2
"Talking in tongues…like a weird language…my mum…my dad…my sister" CC G 4
"There are heaps of different ways (to pray)" CC G 5
(Speaking in tongues) "It's a language that only God understands…only some people can do it…words are weird…for some reason it makes you happy… like angels…I have heard my Nan" CC G5
"You can't exactly compare them…they are completely different…I think all prayers are the same…except they just say it in a different way…this is my God…I love Him…He's the only one…that's what they all probable say" JSB1
"Basically luck and staying with your God…you believe in God and He will believe in you" JSB1
"Like all religions have something to say to their God…want to speak…say thank you" JSB2
"I like the songs…comes from thousands of years ago" JSB 4
"Most people pray…most people have a religion" JSG1
(kneeling) "universal way to pray…showing that you are closer to the ground and God is higher than you" JSG 3
"You can't think of anything around us…just focus on our right speech…focus on God…must look down at the mat" MSG 1

"Prayer is important …in every religion it is different…in Islam prayer is communicating to Allah and thanking him" MSG 2

"At the end you put your hands up …like this… and you can wish for what you want" MSG 3

"God can hear it and understand if you really want to pray…with a clean heart… He will hear you" MSG 5

"Prayer is like a big thing…80% of people do it"ISB5

"A different kind of language" ISG2

People pray because…

"To have a good will" GS B2

"People with an easier life don't pray as much" GS B3

"Sometimes when I pray to my Pa I feel as though he is listening and feel better all round" GSB5

To "get relaxed, if you are nervous" CaSB1

 "If I need something, to help me, I pray to God and it usually does it" CaS B2

"Prayer helps people by relieving their sins…getting all of the bad stuff out of them" CaS B4

"You can just feel something… If you are angry at someone and then you can be nice to them" CaSB4

"I feel most prayerful when I am happy and just want to talk to God" CaSB4

"Prayer…keeps me going…I am tired because of the hay fever… I wake at six every morning" CaS B5

 "helps you get over things" CaS G1

"getting things out" – " just talk about stuff" CaS G2

"Just makes you feel good . . . just look at it….He is watching over us" CaSG2

"My grandmother was in hospital….. I prayed every day and she said it made her feel better… it helped… Made me feel happy" CaS G3

When "going through a big storm" CaSG3

"My Reconciliation was special….I told the Priest…..told stuff that might have been bad …make it better" CaS G4

"I just felt better…used to run around and be noisy…I felt happier…peaceful inside" CC B1

"Gives encouragement" CC B 2

"Mum and Dad…when they have fights…they threaten they will break up and stuff…I pray that they won't break up…they will stay together and forget about the fight…once as soon as I had finished praying they stopped fighting…the other times it took a day for mum to come back". CC B5

"Situation…at school...hurt going around…(and I had) sore throats at night…it would disturb my sleep…we kept praying about it…it's not so worse" CC G1

"My auntie had breast cancer…now she is healed" CC G 2

"Pray because there's no body else to ask…if it is really important…the Lord can help…the Lord can fix it" CC G 3

"When you pray wonderful things happen…miracles happen…it makes your life heaps easier" CC G5

"If you do pray you get a benefit from it…I know that He (God) does pay a lot of attention to the kids when they pray…it's good to hear young kids praying" JSB3

"To calm us down" JSB 5

"I feel like I am a bit closer to Hashem…I feel a bit better if I am sad…it's like a dog….you can just talk to them and they won't talk back…you can just tell them something" JSB5

"I feel most prayerful when I do it quietly to myself…it gives me a good feeling, thinking that you are really next to God…talking to Him" JSG 2

(people pray because) "it gives them special meaning…emotional meaning and contentment" JSG3

(people pray because) "They want to talk to God or they could just do it because their family does" JSG 4

"I like it when everyone is quiet (during the prayers) you're saying it to yourself…saying sorry" JSG 5

"It brings you closer to your God…great feeling of contentment…you feel a good person" MSB1

"May God have our souls and may we live in peace" MSB 3

"God be pleased with us and show us the right path" MSB3

"(I feel most prayerful) "When I get back from school… when I read the Q'ran…nearly every day one page with my Dad" MSB 4

(I feel most prayerful) "When it's Eide (end of Ramadan) …you go to the mosque…like your feelings go to you and you have to pray" MSB 5

"Praising God… thanking God makes your life easier" MSG 4

"People pray if they are upset, they want something set right or they are angry" ISB1

"Two years ago my dog Tessa got to be put down…I got down on my knees…beside my bed…and said…please look after my dog…helped me to dry my tears…actually made me feel better" ISG2

"Maybe they pray because they think…I am a person…no one can take that privilege from me…God is there to help me…to love me…he cannot do everything I say…he's a Father" ISG2

"I would pray if I was really sad" ISG3

Prayer comes from…

"Inspiration…feel so…yeah…hard to explain…you just feel so…feel so good" GSG1

"Prayers go around with you …in you…until you need to get them out…maybe in church" GSG1

"Prayers come from peoples emotions…thoughts…goes up to God" GS G4

"from in you…in your heart" GSG3

"Comes from… like your brain…a wish … but not in a greed way" GS B5

"My mum didn't teach me…not my dad…when I was three I started speaking in tongues" CC B 5

"Mum taught me when I was three…I heard her praying at night…having worship…I heard her praying and I learnt to pray…living in a Christina family" CC G1

"Comes from the heart…you really want to get it through" ISG1

"Comes from within you sometimes…from your head… heart or feelings, from the Saints, from school… in church…you can see it…see adults praying…little children see and just know" CaSB2

"you don't learn…you just already know…naturally" IS G5

" I have heard…mostly seen on TV that people pray before they go to bed" ISG1

(From watching "The Sound of Music") "If someone is in pain…Nuns go … please help this person survive" ISG2

Prayer is " a natural thing…like a child learning to walk…they just hope and do it" CaS B1

Future thinking in prayer…

 "One day it will come true…One day you will be so glad GSG1

 "I think prayers will become more popular in the future…maybe 100% in about 50 years" GSG1

"Most of the people who stop praying commit suicide…stop praying…give up all hope" GS G5

"In side you, you have this spirit…keeps you alive and runs your body… (if you don't care for the spirit) one day your spirit will just drop and you will be really scared all of the time…have no faith… and it will be really hard" CC B 3.

"After a while of talking to Jesus …get everything bad out of your brain…then Jesus can talk to you" CC B3

"Day of Judgment…He is majestic…on the throne" MSB1

If we pray our God builds up palaces for us in heaven" MSB3

"You never know some day you will just die" CaSB5

"even when things go wrong it can work out" CaS G1

How does prayer work…..

"God is telepathic GS B1

"eyes shut helps you get close to God" GS B4

"Prayers come from heaven, or from your life, when your eyes are shut God's words are out there…they come around the church and help you" GSB4

 " go to God's notebook" GSB4

"Prayers help you spiritually…not on the outside but on the inside…like if someone teases you that's on the inside" CaS B3

 "Prayer probably comes off you like a thought ray…a sixth sense…like sharks have electro-sensitivity" CaSB5

 "from feelings...heart…to heaven" CaSG4

 "eyes shut…then you don't get distracted" CC B1

"When you open the Sidur …they (prayers) float into your mind…they hover there…then they float up to heaven" JSB5

"I think they dissolve…if you are in a closed room…how do they get out?...like a fire smoke…it goes up…you can't see it or know where it goes" JSG3

"Comes from inside you and goes up …into the clouds…God hears it and grants it if he thinks that it is reasonable" ISG4

Unanswered prayer…

 "God has a plan…Cycle of life…God knows…in safe hands" CC B 4

 "You sort of deserve it …you do lots of sin…I guess He wouldn't listen to you…like 50 sins and only one Mitzvah…He wouldn't listen" JSB3.

 "Comes from God…we can't do anything about it….just praise to Allah" MSG4

 (Death of grandmother) "Allah has created my grandma and he's giving (taking) her back…He created us and the world and when we die he get us back…so no one have to cry" MSG5

 "He has a lot of things to do up there…it is a pity he can't fit one more in GSG3

"With your problem…He just gives you a hint of how to fix it up" IS G2

"Something better will happen even if it looks bad" CaSB3

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