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Teacher perceptions of socially withdrawn children

A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This thesis addresses how understanding teacher's beliefs and perceptions about socially withdrawn behaviours offers insight into how teacher-child relationships may support or harm the child. This study examined teacher perceptions of characteristics such as 'intelligent', resilient' and 'assertive', at primary school level by using teacher ratings in response to vignettes describing shy and unsociable children of both genders. Teacher beliefs about the negative costs of socially withdrawn behaviour, and attributions of socially withdrawn behaviour were also explored through teacher ratings, and teacher reported pedagogical practice was investigated through open-ended questions.

Ninety seven teachers responded to an online survey. They rated withdrawn children most highly on the characteristics of intelligent, self-controlled and capable, and least highly on the characteristics of assertive, self-confident and cooperative. This study found that teachers do differentiate between shy and unsociable children, with unsociable children generally viewed more favourably than shy children. Teachers did not distinguish between withdrawn children on the basis of gender, however, interaction effects were also found across a range of characteristics, with a general pattern of less concern for 'female shy' and 'male unsociable' types. Teachers perceived more negative cost (both academic and social) for the shy type of child. The teachers who answered this survey demonstrated knowledge about ways of assisting socially withdrawn children, although suggestions differed vastly. Recommendations were made that teachers be encouraged to be more aware of the consequences of social withdrawal and of their own responses to socially withdrawn children.

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iii
List of tables	vi
List of figures	vii
CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
<i>Background of the study</i>	1
<i>Statement of the problem</i>	2
<i>Purpose of the study</i>	2
<i>Significance of the study</i>	3
<i>Definition of Terms</i>	3
<i>Theoretical framework</i>	4
<i>Organisation of Study</i>	5
CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	6
<i>Social withdrawal</i>	6
<i>Intervening with Social withdrawal</i>	15
<i>Teachers and Social Withdrawal</i>	18
<i>New Zealand schools and social withdrawal</i>	25
<i>Factors relating to positive life outcomes for withdrawn children</i>	26
<i>Research questions</i>	31
CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY	32
<i>Introduction</i>	32
<i>Participants</i>	32
<i>Research Paradigm</i>	33
	iv

<i>Survey</i>	33
<i>Procedure</i>	37
<i>Data Analysis</i>	39
CHAPTER IV RESULTS	40
<i>Preliminary Analyses</i>	40
<i>Research Question 1</i>	42
<i>Research Question 2</i>	49
<i>Research Question 3</i>	54
<i>Exploratory Analyses</i>	60
CHAPTER V DISCUSSION	63
<i>Summary of the Study</i>	63
<i>Discussion of the findings</i>	65
<i>Implications for practice</i>	72
<i>Limitations and recommendations for future research</i>	73
<i>Concluding statement</i>	77
References	78
Appendices	88
<i>Appendix A: Survey (printed copy of online version)</i>	88
<i>Appendix B: Information letter to principals</i>	91
<i>Appendix C: Low risk evaluation confirmation</i>	92

List of tables

Chapter 3

Table 3.0	Demographic characteristics of participants	32
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Chapter 4

Table 4.0	Mean Scores (standard deviations) for Child Characteristics as a Function of their Type of Withdrawal and Gender	44
Table 4.1	Mean scores (standard deviations) for adjectives relating to 'intelligence' across vignette gender and withdrawal type	46
Table 4.2	Mean scores (standard deviations) for adjectives relating to 'social competence' across vignette gender and withdrawal type	47
Table 4.3	Mean scores (standard deviations) for 'resilience' across vignette gender and withdrawal type	48
Table 4.4	Mean Scores (standard deviations) for attribution and negative cost statements as a Function of their type of withdrawal and gender	49
Table 4.5	Percentage of teacher answers mentioning common themes in response to the question: "What would you need to consider when working with this child, if anything?"	52
Table 4.6	% of teachers mentioning types of support or resources for a socially withdrawn child (across vignette gender and vignette withdrawal type)	54
Table 4.7	Frequency of responses for open-ended question: What strategies would you consider using to develop this child's peer relationships, if any?	59
Table 4.8	Highest and lowest means for 'resilience', 'intelligence', 'social competence', negative academic cost' and 'negative social cost' across vignette withdrawal type and gender	61

List of figures

Chapter 3

Figure 3.0	Vignettes used in online survey	35
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Chapter 4

Figure 4.0	Mean responses to elements of social competence across vignette withdrawal type and vignette gender	48
Figure 4.1	Frequency of responses indicating the location of the behaviour across vignette withdrawal type and gender	53
Figure 4.2	Number of teachers mentioning specific types of support or resources for a socially withdrawn child by vignette gender and vignette withdrawal type.	55
Figure 4.3	Type of vignette child with highest and lowest mean scores for each objective	60

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

Background of the study

Teacher beliefs and perceptions of children impact upon children's developmental outcomes. They influence the classroom climate, the decisions they make, and their responses to behaviour (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). Understanding teacher's beliefs and perceptions about classroom behaviours gives us insight into how teacher-child relationships develop. With all children, a positive teacher-child relationship may buffer them from negative adjustment outcomes, whereas a stressful teacher-student relationship may do the opposite (Birch & Ladd, 1997). In the case of socially withdrawn children, the impact of a positive-teacher-child relationship has been shown to be especially critical (Arbeau, Coplan, & Weeks, 2010; Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, & Hughes, 2011). It is increasingly understood that children who socially withdraw from their peers are at risk for a number of negative outcomes, including anxiety, depression and poor academic achievement, and that the ways in which teachers respond to these children is critical to later social and emotional adjustment (Arbeau, et al., 2010; Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki, & Rose-Krasnor, 2011).

Children with internalising behaviours may have significant needs, but 'fall under the radar' of teachers. Given that internalising behaviours do not often impact upon classmates or teacher, it is far easier to ignore a shy child, than a child using physical aggression against his or her peers. We know that students with internalising behavior problems are identified and referred for assistance less than students with externalising behaviors (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009).

Coplan and Rubin (2010) define 2 subtypes of socially withdrawn children, determined by the motivation for the withdrawal. If the motivation is fear or wariness, the term 'shy' is used, but if the motivation is a preference for solitude, the term 'social disinterest' or 'unsociability' is used (a non-fearful preference for solitude). Of these two subtypes of social withdrawal, shyness is better understood. Research has extended to both preschool and school aged children and has examined teacher self-reports of experiences with real shy children,

perceptions of shy children, and teacher's self-reported pedagogical practices. Researchers have also been interested in the distinction between these two motivations for social withdrawal. Teacher behaviours, perceptions and pedagogical practices with this second subtype of socially withdrawn children are little understood.

Statement of the problem

Our understanding of the differences in the way teachers perceive and respond to socially withdrawn children is limited, especially in regards to unsociable children. Given what we understand about the impact of teacher's perceptions on shy children, and their critical role in establishing a positive emotional climate and well-functioning teacher-child relationship (Gazelle, 2006; Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), it is surprising that this relationship has not been better explored. Much less is understood about teacher perceptions of children who express a preference for solitude (unsociability). There are a small number of research papers involving unsociable children, including investigating differences between teacher perceptions of shy and unsociable children at kindergarten (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), the use of parental rating scales to distinguish between shyness and unsociability (Coplan, Prakash, O'Neil, & Armer, 2004), the socioemotional adjustment of unsociable (versus shy) children in middle childhood (Copland & Weeks, 2010) and young children's perceptions of socially withdrawn peers (Coplan, Girardi, Findlay, & Frohlick, 2007).

Arbeau and Coplan (2007) have so far been the only researchers to compare teacher perceptions of these two types of social withdrawal in depth, but as yet, this comparison has not been made at primary school level. Additionally, teacher perceptions of the characteristics of shy and unsociable children (for example, 'capable', 'resilient', 'intelligent') have not been compared. The current study seeks to contribute to the research by comparing teacher perceptions of shy and unsociable children at primary school level, and by including comparisons teacher ratings of characteristics for these types of socially withdrawn children.

Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to explore teachers' ratings of hypothetical children with socially withdrawn behaviour for characteristics, negative costs of

the socially withdrawn behaviour, and attributions of the behaviour. As well as understanding how these ratings apply to socially withdrawn children as a group, it is also intended to identify differences in ratings across child gender and type of social withdrawal (unsociable or shy). A second purpose is to better understand what teachers believe is important in terms of pedagogical practice with socially withdrawn children. A third purpose is to explore three over-arching characteristics in more depth; social competence, intelligence and resilience, to better understand how these might be perceived in relation to socially withdrawn children.

Significance of the study

This study seeks to further an understanding of how socially withdrawn children are perceived and supported at primary school. The results of this study may offer new insight into whether primary school teachers perceive differences between shy and unsociable children, and also how they see their role in helping both types of children to adapt socially. This research also has applications specific to New Zealand classrooms, as very little is currently understood about the way New Zealand teachers may perceive and respond to either shy or unsociable behaviours. It may provide a basis for further research specific to the New Zealand context, as well as informing teacher education and practice.

Definition of Terms

Social withdrawal: In this research the term 'social withdrawal' will be used to describe children who withdraw from contact with both familiar and unfamiliar peers. Additionally, social withdrawal will be considered an internal source of 'behavioural solitude', as distinct from external sources, for example, active isolation by peers (Coplan & Rubin, 2010).

Definitions provided by Coplan and Rubin (2010) will be used to further classify socially withdrawn behaviour. Within the overarching term of 'social withdrawal' they define 2 groups determined by the motivation for the withdrawal:

Shyness: the motivation for social withdrawal is fear or wariness

Unsociability: the motivation for social withdrawal is a preference for solitude

Theoretical framework

The study of peer relationships has become increasingly prominent due to a growing conviction that children with positive peer relationships are likely to enjoy better social and academic outcomes. This has not been well addressed by any one particular theory, but is present in diverse theoretical perspectives, which share a consensus that positive peer interactions are a vital part of childhood and adolescence.

In the early part of last century, the work of Piaget, and Sullivan, outlined in Chapter II, laid the groundwork for this field (Piaget, 1926; Sullivan, 1953). Learning and Social learning theory have recently been more central to current research on children's peer relationships and social skills (Rubin, Wojslawowicz, & Oh, 2007), a core part of which is the premise that children learn how to behave in their social world through direct peer tutelage and by observing each other. Children positively reinforce desirable social behaviours, and punish or ignore non-normative social behaviours. Group socialisation theory (Harris, 1995) is also relevant, as it emphasised the role that the peer group plays in personality and social development. It states that children take on the norms prevalent in the groups they spend most time with, and emphasises that these groups consist of children more often than parents.

Theories that explain the processes that take place when peer relationships are inadequate are less prominent, despite the abundance of research describing the negative consequences of such peer interactions. The term 'social withdrawal' has been used in a variety of contexts, and has a number of definitions. The work of researchers Robert Coplan and Kenneth Rubin in establishing a theoretical framework for social withdrawal is used to guide this research (Coplan & Rubin, 2010).

Theories that describe the importance of the teacher and their perceptions are also central to this research with the understanding that it is not only students' actual characteristics that influence teacher behaviour, but also teachers' perceptions or beliefs about those characteristics. 'Self-fulfilling prophecy effects' and 'pygmalion effects' can be seen as a subset of what are referred to as 'expectation effects'. These are the notions that all teachers hold about the current

and future academic performance and classroom behaviour of their students based on their interpretation of available information (Rubie-Davies, 2008).

Organisation of Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I includes the background of the study, statement of the problem, the purpose and significance of the study, a definition of terms, and theoretical framework. Chapter II presents a review of the literature, which includes research on social withdrawal, the relationship between teachers and social withdrawal, social withdrawal in New Zealand schools, and factors that impact upon positive life outcomes for socially withdrawn children, concluding with the research questions that arise from the review.

Chapter III describes the methodology used for this research. It includes the participants, research paradigm, survey, procedure and data analysis. Chapter IV presents the study's findings, divided by the research questions of this study. Chapter V provides a summary of the entire study, discussion of the findings, implications of the findings for theory and practice, limitations, recommendations for further research, and a concluding statement.

CHAPTER II REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The main scope of the literature review is the main themes in research into social withdrawal, beginning with the early work of Rubin and colleagues, with an emphasis on international research since 2000. This includes a review of the literature about the causes, consequences and interventions with social withdrawal within an up to date of conceptualisation of social withdrawal and its subtypes.

Research about the perceptions of teachers and their interactions and strategies with socially withdrawn children is explored. Literature on social competence, resilience and intelligence, three factors considered important in contributing to positive life outcomes, is reviewed, in relation to how these may be perceived in socially withdrawn children. Consideration is also given to what literature can tell us about how social withdrawal is currently understood in New Zealand schools. The literature reviewed expresses a predominantly western perspective, even though social withdrawal can be seen as culturally bound, with differing evaluations and levels of acceptance of this type of behaviour (Chen, 2010). The chapter concludes with the research questions that arise from the review of the literature.

Social withdrawal

The effect of peer relationships on development

Children who feel supported by peers are both more engaged with learning and emotionally secure (Wentzel, 1998). The quality of children's friendships, the nature of children's classroom interactions, the level of acceptance by the peer group and whether peer victimisation is present, are all themes that have been well researched in the field of children's peer relationships (Ladd, Kochenderfer-Ladd, Visconti, & Ettekal, 2012). From the early twentieth century the importance of peer relationships in the normal development of children has been recognised by researchers, established with the work of Piaget, who stressed that it is through peer interactions that skills such as interpersonal perspective taking are developed (Piaget, 1926). In the mid twentieth century, Sullivan developed an 'interpersonal

theory' in which different needs emerge at each stage of development, and are met with particular styles of social relationship. Importantly, in the 'juvenile era' the peer group provides acceptance (Sullivan, 1953).

More recently, learning and social theory, and group socialisation theory have been key to the understanding the importance of functional peer relationships. Learning and Social theory emphasises the important role peers have in teaching each other how to behave in their social world (Rubin, et al., 2007). Group socialisation theory (Harris, 1995) also states the relative importance of peers as part of normal development.

Early understandings of social withdrawal

As well as identifying normal patterns of development, Piaget's early work on healthy peer relationships drew attention to the importance of identifying children who do not follow normal developmental patterns of peer interactions (Piaget, 1926). An early, and possibly first, intervention for shy or withdrawn children placed a small group of socially withdrawn boys with normally developing boys in a camp, to modify socially withdrawn behaviour (Lowenstein & Svendsen, 1938), claiming some success.

Despite this work, there was less interest in the subject until the findings of the Waterloo Longitudinal Project began to be published by Rubin and colleagues in the 1980s and 1990s. This was the first longitudinal study to specifically look at the causes, correlations and consequences of social withdrawal. The project operationalised social withdrawal as the consistent display of solitude among familiar others, explaining it as "a behavioural reflection of contemporaneous feelings of insecurity, social fearfulness, and anxiety, and negative thoughts about the self's social competencies" (Rubin, Root, & Bowker, 2010, p. 81). The project followed 88 children from the ages of 7 to 14. Through means of a regression analysis, the authors found that social withdrawal is predictively associated with such negative outcomes as loneliness, depression and peer rejection. This formed the basis of much research that followed and still informs current research.

Usage of the terms 'social withdrawal', 'shyness', and 'unsociability'

Social withdrawal is such a broad construct that its use can be confusing. Simply stated, the main presenting behaviour for social withdrawal is a contact

with peers at less than a normal rate or time alone at more than a normal rate, with the likelihood of withdrawing from familiar peers, as well as unfamiliar peers. This withdrawal from familiar as well as unfamiliar peers has been especially associated with negative self-esteem, loneliness, anxiety and depression (Rubin, Root, et al., 2010). The use of the construct becomes complicated partly because of a number of possible motivations for the social withdrawal. Some researchers have identified differing motivations for social withdrawal and used that as a way to further classify the behaviours of these children. If a child has a preference for solitude, then a child may present with fairly normal behaviours, except for a marked disinterest in peers. However, a child withdrawn because of fear or weariness, may appear shy, wary of both familiar and unfamiliar social situations, socially reticent, and anxious (Coplan & Rubin, 2010). It is these two categories that are central to this current study.

There have been further categorisations of socially withdrawn children suggested, which will only be briefly described. The same authors who suggest the distinction of the two categories, further describe social withdrawal as ‘a consequence of a behaviourally inhibited temperament, rejection by the peer group, or a lack of social motivation’ (Rubin, Coplan, & Bowker, 2009), emphasising the possible role of the peer group in maintaining existing socially withdrawn behaviour and so giving a possible external reason for the behaviour. This is often mentioned in other literature about social withdrawal, but has not been widely investigated as a type of socially withdrawn behaviour, possibly because it is likely to be present alongside other motivations for social withdrawal, and as a consequence of earlier socially withdrawn behaviour. There is likely interaction between internal and external sources, and a sustained pattern of internally motivated social withdrawal is likely to result in rejection by the peer group (Rubin, et al., 2009).

Other researchers have considered a third type of socially withdrawal; ‘social avoidance’ (Asendorpf, 1990; Coplan & Armer, 2007), characterised by the combination of low–social approach and high–social avoidance motivations. Despite Asendorpf speculating that socially avoidant children would be particularly at risk for social and emotional maladjustment, they have not been well researched. As a group they are characterised by being mostly male, and with

higher rates of aggression than other subtypes (Harrist, Zaia, Bates, Dodge, & Pettit, 1997). Copland and Armer (2007) state that one possible way of understanding social avoidance in children is that it may be a precursor to child depression. The role of depression is also mentioned in a study using a cluster analysis on teacher ratings of children (Harrist, et al., 1997), in which a small number of children identified as socially withdrawn presented with depressive behaviours as the main identifying behaviour.

To further complicate the use of the term, 'socially withdrawn' has sometimes been used interchangeably with 'shy', without acknowledging that not all socially withdrawn children withdraw out of social fear. Even early usage of the term from the Waterloo Longitudinal project did not make this distinction (Rubin, Root, et al., 2010).

Of the two most commonly mentioned types of socially withdrawn children (shy and unsociable), those that can be described as shy, anxious, or socially fearful children seem to be most commonly mentioned. These children want to interact with their peers, but are blocked with worry about being received poorly by their peers (Gazelle & Rubin, 2010). It is a conflict between social approach and avoidance motivations that has long been understood to be at the centre of shy behaviour (Coplan, et al., 2012). Asendorpf characterised shyness as reflecting two competing social motivations (Asendorpf & Meir, 1993), desiring social interaction (a high social approach motivation), inhibited by social avoidance (a high social avoidance motivation). Behaviourally this is manifested through the display of reticent or onlooking behaviour, remaining unoccupied in the presence of peers, or engaging in parallel play (Coplan, et al., 2004).

Unsociable children may be characterised as having both low-social approach motivation and low-social avoidance motivation (Coplan & Armer, 2007). This has been most commonly referred to as 'unsociability' or 'social disinterest'. Compared to those with high social approach, unsociability has received little attention. This may be out of less concern for these children. Harrist et al. (1997) describes them as "socially competent in almost every respect" (p. 291) and notes that they made up approximately two-thirds of the children identified as socially withdrawn in their study into socially withdrawn subtypes. Coplan and Weeks (2010) summarised the conceptual themes from research

asserting a developmental model of unsociability in childhood: 1) unsociability is a distinct form of social withdrawal in childhood, 2) unsociable children have a preference for solitude but are not otherwise averse to engaging in social interaction, 3) while a comparatively benign form of social withdrawal in early childhood, unsociable children will experience greater socio-emotional difficulties later on. It is not clear how different motivations for socially withdrawal interact with each other over time, but it has been proposed that the motivation for social withdrawal becomes less important by middle childhood. Rubin & Asendorpf (1993) speculated that distinctions between shyness and unsociability would become less by middle childhood, with patterns of maladjustment indistinguishable.

Parents, teachers and children have all been found able to determine between the two types of social withdrawal in young children. A parental rating scale was used in one study to distinguish between the two (Coplan, et al., 2004), in which social disinterested children were rated as less negative emotionally by parents, with higher attention spans, and with a greater expressed preference for playing alone. In a later study, the socioemotional adjustment of unsociable (versus shy) children in middle childhood was explored, using maternal ratings, teacher ratings, and child interviews (Coplan & Weeks, 2010). Results clearly demonstrated that unsociability can be distinguished from shyness in middle childhood. Kindergarten teachers have also been found able to distinguish between shyness and unsociability (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), as have young children (Galanaki, 2004). Galanaki's study reported that second grade children could distinguish between children who were content to be alone as compared with children who were alone but felt lonely. While research clearly shows that a distinction between unsociable behaviour and shy behaviour is easily identifiable, less is understood about differences in the long-term impact of socially withdrawn behaviours between these two types.

Long term consequences of social withdrawal

There is a range of academic and social consequences identified for socially withdrawn behaviour. Loneliness, low self-esteem, substance abuse, and peer relationship problems have all been found to be long term social consequences of

social withdrawal (Marchant, et al., 2007). Academically, shy or withdrawn children have been found to do more poorly than their IQs predict. They have less developed language skills, and are likely to perform lower on measures of language performance than their more confident classmates (Evans, 2010).

Most researchers agree that early behavioural types remain static throughout childhood and early adulthood, and longitudinal studies have shown that early social withdrawal predicts negative peer and self-regard, loneliness and depression in adolescence (Rubin, Root, et al., 2010). In an examination of the development of internalising disorders, it was found that anxious or withdrawn behaviour at age eight, as reported by parents, was associated with a greater risk of social phobia and depression in adolescence, even when adverse family factors were taken into account (Goodwin, Fergusson, & Horwood, 2004). In a separate study, a group of 26 year olds were examined, who 23 years earlier had been observed and classified under five temperament types (Caspi, et al., 2003). At age 26, the 8% who had been classified as inhibited at age 3, were characterised by more harm avoidance, less social potency and less positive emotionality, with a higher rate of internalising psychiatric problems.

Despite generally negative findings, researchers have found a great deal of diversity in the longitudinal outcomes of socially withdrawn children (Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Oh, et al., 2008; Rubin, Bowker, & Gazelle, 2010). The factors most commonly mentioned when differences in longitudinal outcomes are noted are gender differences, an inability to regulate negative emotions, and additional social behaviour characteristics (Rubin, Bowker, et al., 2010).

Negative outcomes have been more extensively tracked in those socially withdrawn children who do so out of social fear and there continues to be uncertainty over whether intervention is needed with unsociable children. In fact, the relatively benign nature of social disinterest (or 'unsociability'), when compared to shyness, has often been stated (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993). While possibly viewed as less serious than shyness, unsociability may become increasingly maladaptive through a continued cycle of less social interaction, less acquisition of social skills, and peer rejection (Coplan & Weeks, 2010). While research into this is limited, a recent study showed that unsociable children were likely to be excluded by peers, a finding not consistent with previous assertions,

and indicating more severe consequences than often thought (Coplan, et al., 2004). Gender appears to be a factor in the case of unsociable children, with unsociable boys seeming to experience more peer difficulties (Coplan & Weeks, 2010; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). Regardless of the motivation for social withdrawal, by late childhood, all types of social withdrawal have been found to predict difficulties with peers (Coplan, et al., 2012).

The role of the peer group in reinforcing social withdrawal is becoming increasingly understood, with a potentially complex relationship between social withdrawal and active isolation. The act of withdrawing socially may result in peers actively isolating the withdrawn child (Coplan & Rubin, 2010). Yet, if a socially withdrawn child avoids exclusion or rejection, they might be protected from many of the negative effects of social withdrawal (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004). Peer relations alter the anxiety and depressive symptom trajectories of anxious children over the course of years (Gazelle, 2010). Anxious children who successfully maintain normal peer relationships, demonstrate healthy psychological adjustment. There has been debate about whether this truly reflects an influence on levels of adjustment over time, or whether it is the less vulnerable children who succeed in social relationships. Researchers seem to agree that the first option is quite possible (Gazelle, 2010; Ladd & Burgess, 1999).

Causes of Social withdrawal

Causes of internalising behaviour, including the 'shy' type of social withdrawal, are generally understood from an "interactionist perspective including genes, biology, and environmental interactions" (Schmidt & Bass, 2010, p.24). It is increasingly understood that biological factors may pre-dispose some children to behavioural inhibition. This is thought to relate to a reduced threshold for stimulation in the amygdala, which regulates emotional experiences (Fox, Henderson, Marshall, Nichols, & Ghera, 2005; Kagan, Reznick, & Snidman, 1987).

Parent-child interactions have often been blamed for the development of internalising behaviours and most researchers have emphasised this. Patterns of parent-child interactions in the early years do suggest that parents have an important role in exacerbating existing tendencies. Research strongly suggests that there is a bidirectional model of effects once parents begin to view their child as

behaviourally inhibited. Parents who believe their toddlers are more socially wary, are less likely to encourage exploration and independence (Rubin, Root, et al., 2010) and behave in a more nurturing and protective way (Shamir-Essakow, Ungerer, Rapee, & Safier, 2004). There is often an increasing pattern of parental authoritarian control and negativity as parents view the progress of their socially withdrawn child through school (Hastings, Nuselovici, Rubin, & Cheah, 2010). A contradictory view suggests that parent/ child interactions may not be as important as many researchers state. In a meta-analysis of 47 studies, the association between parenting and child anxiety was tested, finding that parenting accounted for only 4% of the variance in child anxiety, and indicating that other variables are more important (McLeod, Wood, & Weisz, 2007). Patterns of parent/ child interactions have been researched extensively through early childhood, but with little understanding of how parent/child relationships continue to reinforce or affect behaviour beyond the primary school years and into adolescence.

Causes of unsociability are less well understood. Unsociability has been linked to a high temperamental attention span, something that seems to predict a greater object orientation (Coplan & Armer, 2007), or a preference for 'things' rather than people. It has also been suggested that children who display less social interest than their peers may also do so because a lack of emphasis on developing positive peer relationships is modeled by their parents (Prakash & Coplan, 2007). This appears to indicate that the interactions of genes, biology, and environmental interactions may be as relevant to this type of social withdrawal.

Prevalence of social withdrawal

Research on social withdrawal has been impeded by problems defining social withdrawal and with its measurement. Any estimate of the prevalence of social withdrawal is heavily dependent on the tools that measure it, and the definition of the construct, which may vary widely between studies. In a search of the literature, very little reference was made to prevalence rates for socially withdrawn behaviour, though it is estimated that the prevalence of anxious and withdrawn behaviour, loosely grouped, is approximately the same as for conduct disorder, making it a common problem of childhood (Anderson, 1994).

In one of the few references to an actual prevalence rate for social

withdrawal, an estimate in a study of Finnish infants was 2.7% (Puuraa, et al., 2010). Infants were examined by general practitioners in 'well-baby clinics' with an observation method developed for clinical settings, the Alarm Distress BaBy Scale (ADBB). High scores on the ADBB Scale in two subsequent assessments was regarded as a sign of clinically significant infant social withdrawal. References to prevalence rates have mostly utilised prevalence rates of anxiety, estimated at 8%, as a way of reaching an estimate of social withdrawn behaviour (Neil & Christensen, 2009). These rates are only inclusive of the 'shy' type of social withdrawal, and it must be remembered that someone may be anxious without socially withdrawing. What these estimates do demonstrate, is that internalising behaviours are very prevalent throughout society.

Similarity between social withdrawal and other constructs

A common theme in research into internalising disorders is that their conceptualisation has been, and continues to be, problematic. The terms 'behavioural inhibition', 'anxiety', 'social anxiety' and 'anxious solitude' all have some overlap and are used in different contexts. In an integrative review of literature it was established that there are differences in the ways clinical and developmental psychologists have focussed their research into childhood social behaviour (Kingery, Erdley, Marshall, Whitaker, & Reuter, 2010). While clinical psychologists have tended to focus on anxiety (La Greca & Lopez, 1998), developmental psychologists have described similar behaviour as 'shyness' or 'social withdrawal' (Rubin & Coplan, 2004). The extent of overlap is unclear, despite clear indications that social withdrawal is a usual behavioural manifestation of social anxiety.

'Anxiety' is related to social withdrawal, but is used in a variety of contexts and may be used to describe fluid behaviour within the bounds of normal child development (Kearney, 2005). There are categories in the DSM-IV-TR that incorporate the behavioural tendencies of social withdrawal (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) while not relating specifically to the construct. Of these, 'social anxiety' has the most in common with social withdrawal. Social anxiety disorder (SAD) is distinct from social withdrawal in that it is a formal diagnostic state (Kearney, 2005). SAD describes a severe, irrational fear and avoidance of social

interactions and possible negative consequences (American Psychiatric Association, 2000). The distinction between 'shy' social withdrawal and SAD seems to be limited, except that 'shy' social withdrawal is a description of behaviour, not a formal diagnostic state, and appears less severe (Gazelle, 2010).

Gazelle's description of anxious solitude is very similar to the 'shy' subtype of social withdrawal. She describes children with anxious solitude as engaging in elevated rates of solitary behaviour among familiar peers due to social anxiety. It does not incorporate children with lower levels of social approach motivation (Gazelle, 2010).

Behavioural inhibition is a term more commonly used with younger children than those of school age. It is understood to predict anxious, withdrawn behaviour in children (Rubin, Root, et al., 2010), as well as the later development of anxiety disorders, such as SAD in adolescence (Biederman, et al., 2001). Behavioural inhibition is a dispositional construct, of which patterns of avoidant behaviour and fearfulness are key features. However, whereas behaviourally inhibited children may enjoy normal peer relationships, socially withdrawn children are distinct, as they are as likely to withdraw from familiar peers, as unfamiliar peers.

It is worth noting that even though Coplan and Rubin conclude that there is moderate agreement between typically used assessments with regards to measures of shyness, social withdrawal and behavioural inhibition, that the discriminant validity of these measures remains unclear. Coplan and Rubin suggest that studies assessing several of these constructs with several measures in the sample are needed to see whether it is possible to provide an empirical distinction between these related constructs (Coplan & Rubin, 2010).

Intervening with Social withdrawal

Researchers highlight the need to provide support and intervention to children showing early signs of anxious or withdrawn behaviours (Asendorpf, 2010; Booth-LaForce & Oxford, 2008; Miller & Coll, 2007). Because internalising behaviors are usually covert, unless presenting alongside externalising behaviours, they present unique challenges in referral and intervention practices in schools. Students with internalising behavior problems are both identified and referred for

additional assistance less often than students with externalising behavior problems (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009). Students may be viewed as 'merely shy', without an understanding of how this characteristic can impact on long term outcomes for the individual (Marchant, et al., 2007). Furthermore, behaviours may be misinterpreted as low motivation, laziness, an attention deficit, or reflecting low ability (Huberty, 2009).

Huberty (2009) suggests that schools do more than simply use 'reactive' methods for identifying students with internalising problems. He outlines an ideal school practice that involves screening all children, using teacher behaviour rating scales and self-report measures in older children, and providing in-service training in the identification of internalising disorders to teachers. Given that early identification of problems gives the greatest chance of intervening successfully at the family level, further research and change in this field is vital.

There is generally agreement in the literature about the best ways of intervening with socially withdrawn children, and the targeting of social skills and involving peers in interventions are often mentioned (Greco & Morris, 2001; Rubin, et al., 2009; Rubin, Root, et al., 2010). The targeting of anxiety is also commonly mentioned with 'shy' socially withdrawn children (Gosch, Flannery-Schroeder, Mauro, & Compton, 2006; Kearney, 2005).

Some of the most specific advice about intervention comes from Rubin and Coplan. In their summary of future directions for research in the field of social withdrawal, they state the following as critical facets of future prevention and intervention programs; intervention should begin in early childhood, intervention must include a focus not only on teaching skills but also on emotion regulation, intervention must involve both familiar and unfamiliar peers, and intervention works best if it includes a substantive parental component (Coplan & Rubin, 2007).

In an absence of interventions specifically targeted at social withdrawal, interventions commonly targeted at anxious children, such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy and Social Skills training have been shown to have some benefit with shy socially withdrawn children (Gosch, et al., 2006). Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) has been shown to be beneficial when a student has adequate verbal and intellectual abilities, when cognitions are thought to be problematic in anxiety inducing situations, and where compliance is good with respect to self-monitoring

(Kearney, 2005). In a review of the effectiveness of school-based prevention and early intervention programs for anxiety, results indicated that most universal, selective and indicated prevention programs effectively reduced symptoms of anxiety in children and adolescents, with effect sizes ranging from 0.11 to 1.37 (Neil & Christensen, 2009). A large number of the studies reviewed were based on the principles of CBT, though other therapeutic approaches employed included psycho-education, relaxation, and modeling.

Social skills training targets social skills such as making introductions, initiating conversations, and cooperating with others. The use of social skills training has been popular since the 1980s and moderate effects in enhancing specifically targeted social skills have been achieved (Rubin & Coplan, 2004), though it is not clear whether long term gains in enhanced peer relationships can be expected in withdrawn children. Whether social skills training is equally as useful for both shy and unsociable behaviour is unclear. It has been deemed less useful in cases where a student has social skills, but chooses not to use them (Kearney, 2005). Coplan (2004) suggests that teachers have a lesser tendency to intervene with unsociable children than with shy children based on a belief that unsociable children can behave socially in a competent manner when they choose to. As yet this perception has been little explored.

Increasing peer involvement with socially withdrawn children is a common theme in intervention literature, and specific techniques have been applied with reported success in classroom situations. For example, Positive peer reporting (PPR) has been mentioned as a favoured component for treating socially withdrawn behavior (Marchant, et al., 2007). This involves teaching students to notice and report positive peer behavior then reinforcement of the students for reporting these behaviors. Literature has tended to focus on outcomes for groups of children, rather than for individuals, and little consideration has been given whether there are some children who need a different approach, Gazelle (2010) suggests that existing peer relations should be carefully considered on an individual basis. There may be such entrenched patterns of negativity that other intervention may do little good without assessing and modifying the peer context (Gazelle, 2010). Research on such interventions as 'friends for life' or 'circle time' have generally positive findings (Neil & Christensen, 2009) however, there is a

limited understanding of how such interventions alter individual trajectories, and we do not know whether a socially withdrawn child, unsociable child, or depressed child will respond in similar ways.

Parents have a role as teachers of social skills and emotional competence, and as an advocate for their child (Miller & Coll, 2007). There is a large body of research indicating that patterns for maintaining socially withdrawn behaviour have their roots in the child-parent relationship. Given this, there is surprisingly little research into interventions at this level. In an intervention programme for withdrawn or anxious preschool children, after 6 sessions of a group parent-education program, children showed a significant decrease in anxiety diagnoses (Rapee, Kennedy, Ingram, Edwards, & Sweeney, 2005). This was more successful for the group with parent involvement, than the group without parent involvement. Less directly, parents can encourage participation in sports teams and extracurricular activities that may provide a positive avenue for shy children to both connect with peers, and achieve success. In a recent study, five children who were initially shy, but experienced increased social acceptance through peer recognition of their strengths, showed greater social confidence and fewer depressive symptoms a year later (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004).

There seems to be much that teachers and schools can do to intervene with children displaying socially withdrawn behaviour, but there are some cautions involved. We have very little information about the generalisation, maintenance, and social validity of the behavioral gains in these studies, and this must be kept in mind when determining what is best for these children.

Teachers and Social Withdrawal

Teacher perceptions of social withdrawal

Hughes views teachers as chief architects and managers of classroom contexts, able to exert considerable influence on the peer contexts and peer relationships of their students (Hughes, 2012). Teachers perceive both unsociability and shyness as both a possible advantage and a disadvantage for various competences in the classroom. While ample research has found that teachers are generally concerned about shy children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), a recent study collating teacher statements about shy children, found that teachers

tended to like shy children because they were comparatively quiet and well-behaved. Teachers also listed a number of positive consequences for shy children, such as being a good listener; not getting into trouble; and developing intimate, close relationships with one or two friends (Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, Hughes, 2011).

A recent study examined kindergarten teachers' responses to both shy and unsociable children described in vignettes (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). The Canadian kindergarten teachers surveyed were more tolerant of the behaviours of the hypothetical unsociable child than the shy child and believed that shy behaviours had a greater social and academic cost for children than unsociable behaviours. Teachers reported that they would be more likely to directly intervene and promote social skill acquisition in the shy children. They would also be less likely to intervene with unsociable children. These findings are some of the most detailed in regards to understanding differences in teacher beliefs and responses toward shy and unsociable children.

In their study examining subtypes of social withdrawal (Harrist, et al., 1997), the authors noted that for the subtype 'unsociable', it was only lower rates of interaction in the playground that distinguished these children from their peers. Teachers did not rate these children as socially withdrawn, an observation the researchers found interesting, given unsociable children's lower rates of interaction and sociometric neglect. This caused the researchers to question whether teachers recognised the ability of these children to behave in a socially competent manner when needed, or whether they were poor at recognising sociometric neglect among any group. Whatever the reason, these results do contribute to a picture of lesser teacher concern for unsociable children.

There has been a greater quantity of research investigating shy behaviours in the classroom setting. Vignettes describing different behaviours of hypothetical children have been widely used in studies assessing teacher beliefs, including shy behaviours (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan, et al., 2011). Coplan, Hughes, Bosacki and Rose-Krasnor (2011) examined teacher's self-reported strategies, beliefs and attitudes toward shy children. Mean responses were calculated for teacher beliefs about child behaviour under the following headings: stability, personality-situation, academic abilities, intelligence, negative consequences. Teachers

reported that they were more likely to use peer-focused and indirect strategies with shy children, but high-powered and social learning strategies with exuberant children. The authors also found that teachers rated shy children (in vignettes) as less intelligent than exuberant or normal children. Another study focused on teachers' self-reported pedagogical practices towards socially inhibited, hyperactive and average kindergarten children (Thijs, Koomen, & Van der Leij, 2006). The authors found that teachers reported more behaviour regulation for hyperactive children and more socio-emotional support for inhibited children.

Teacher expectations

A reflective approach is necessary for teachers to determine appropriate behavioural and academic expectations that do not limit a students' potential, set them up for failure or impose personal or cultural biases (Kauffman & Landrum, 2009). We increasingly understand that what teachers think of their students may affect classroom interactions, and increase the likelihood that students will behave according to teacher expectations.

Academic debate and research about the effects of teacher expectations has been active since the 1968 'Pygmalion' study which described an experiment on Grade one to six children at an American school. Teachers were told that certain students would 'bloom' academically during the year, and results of pre and post testing on an intelligence test showed that these randomly selected children did show an improvement in IQ scores (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968).

Teacher expectations influence that ways in which teachers interact with groups and individuals, the learning experiences they offer these children, and the socio-emotional climate they provide for students (Kuklinski & Weinstein, 2001). Expectation effects can be described as the notions that all teachers hold about the current and future academic performance and classroom behaviour of their students based on their interpretation of available information (Rubie-Davies, 2008). 'Self-fulfilling prophecy' effects are perhaps the best known of types of expectation effects, and occur when an initial (inaccurate) teacher belief leads to its fulfillment. The effect of these different levels of teacher responses means that student behaviour is likely to become more closely aligned with the expectations of the teacher, rather than continuing on its initial trajectory (Brophy, 1982). A

teacher that has high expectations for a student is likely to provide classroom experiences and a socio-emotional climate that sets a student up for success.

Various research has looked at the impact of 'high-expectation' teachers versus 'low-expectation teachers, 'high-bias' versus 'low-bias' teachers, and 'high-differentiating' versus 'low-differentiating' teachers on outcomes for students. Through research done into the difference in classroom climate between teachers who strongly differentiate between students (high-differentiation) and those who differentiate less, it was found that low-differentiating teachers provided more positive feedback, encouraged peer support, fostered intrinsic motivation, had 'incremental' notions of intelligence, and took responsibility for student progress (Weinstein, 2002). Additionally, in classes with low-differentiating teachers, much less of the variance in student achievement could be explained by teacher expectations than in the classrooms of high-differentiating teachers.

A further way of understanding teacher expectations is through their expectations for the student group as a whole, so that teachers can be classified as being generally 'high expectation teachers' or 'low expectation teachers'. New Zealand research tracked academic and social outcomes for students of teachers who had high expectations for all of their students, and teachers with low expectations. In classes with 'high-expectation' teachers, students made much greater gains in reading across a year and improved their self-perceptions of their own performance (Rubie-Davies, 2006).

'High-bias' teachers are much more readily influenced by information about their students than 'low-bias' teachers and allow information they are given to override their own perceptions. (Babad & Taylor, 1992) found that the attitudes of high-bias teachers towards the students they had lower expectations for, were easily determined through non-verbal behaviours, even by 10-year-old students. This shows that the non-verbal messages about expectations that teachers may be unaware of giving, are easily interpreted by students. The labeling of students is an issue teachers need to consider in their own practice. Labelling a child 'quiet' or 'shy' may have a self-fulfilling prophecy effect, and become integrated into a child's identity through a cycle of the child behaving more in line with the teacher's expectations (Jones & Gerig, 1994).

Teacher relationships with socially withdrawn children

The previous section outlined teacher qualities that were likely to benefit all students in the class, including those with socially withdrawn behaviour; that is, low-bias, high-expectation and low-differentiating teachers were shown to expect the best, and therefore get the best out of their students. The teacher-child relationship places the issue of favourable classroom conditions for the socially withdrawn child at a more personal level. Plentiful research has supported the importance of positive teacher-child relationships for children's academic, social, and behavioural success in school, and this seems especially critical if the child is at risk for school failure (Baker, 2006; Howes, Hamilton, & Matheson, 1994; O'Connor & McCartney, 2007). For shy children, positive teacher-child relationships may play an important protective role in socio-emotional adjustment (Arbeau, et al., 2010; Bosacki, et al., 2011).

There have been some discrepancies in the research about the extent to which teachers recognise or support socially withdrawn children. Some researchers have claimed that shy children are relatively 'invisible' to teachers (Rubin, 1982). Some have even suggested that teachers may inadvertently encourage shy or on-looking behaviour by reinforcing it, as shy children are easier to manage in the classroom (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). Other researchers have indicated that this is a simplistic view of the relationship between socially withdrawn teachers and their students. A Norwegian study of the relationship between passivity and school and shyness found that teachers were found to be especially supportive of withdrawn children, and that their interactions with these children were more likely to involve praise (Paulsen, Bru, & Murberg, 2006), something to which shy children are thought to be especially responsive to (Evans, 2010).

There are many strategies a classroom teacher can use with a shy child. Evans claims that teachers are quite perceptive in determining effective strategies to use with shy children, such as minimising embarrassment and stress, supporting and encouraging, using well organised material, and ensuring that the classroom environment is predictable and calm (Evans, 2010). To increase participation, teachers can change the social environment, encourage or shape increased responsiveness, minimise stress or embarrassment, engage shy students in special activities, and involve them in frequent private talks (Brophy, 1996).

A recent study found that teachers had appropriate suggestions for encouraging greater oral communication for shy children (Bosacki, et al., 2011). These focused on encouraging oral communication in the classroom to represent one's thinking (self-expression), as well as interactions with peers. Teachers also talked about the importance of developing a receptive and unthreatening classroom environment. There is much less understood about the ways in which teachers interact with children who withdraw because of a preference for solitary play.

Teachers seem to have an especially important role in encouraging increased involvement with peers. Peer relations alter the anxiety and depressive symptom trajectories of anxious children over the course of years (Gazelle, 2010). Anxious children who are able to successfully maintain normal peer relationships, demonstrate healthy psychological adjustment. If able to avoid exclusion or rejection, they might be protected from many of the negative effects of social withdrawal (Gazelle & Rudolph, 2004).

Gender differences

While an understanding of the impact of teachers on children who withdraw out of a preference for solitary play is scant, there are indications that teachers respond differently to withdrawn children based on gender. In a Canadian study, teachers reported that they would be more likely to intervene by promoting social skills and report unsociable behaviours if it was displayed by a boy as compared to a girl (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). This provides some of the first evidence to suggest that teachers may view unsociable behaviours as more serious when displayed by boys. This may be in part moderated by the generally more positive nature of female teacher-child interactions (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009).

For shy children, being male is perceived as being more problematic in most of the literature (Rubin & Coplan, 2004). However, two recent studies show surprisingly few gender effects for shy children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan, et al., 2011), indicating that the relationship is not so strong as presumed, or that there may be other factors involved.

Dependence, confrontation and closeness in teacher-child relationships

Shy children tend to develop less close, less confrontational, and more dependent relationships with their teachers than their non-shy peers (Arbeau, et al., 2010; Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). A close teacher-child relationship is one that consists of warmth and open communication. In contrast, a conflictual teacher-child relationship has high levels of tension, disputes, and hostility, and in a dependent teacher-child relationship, the child is overly 'clingy' and reliant on the teacher.

In a study of infants and their relationships with their teachers, dependence on teachers and security with teacher were both associated with social withdrawal (Howes, et al., 1994). These early relationships seem to predict the later quality of the child-teacher relationship. In a longitudinal study involving slightly older children, connections between child shyness, effortful control, and gender and teacher-child relationship quality in third grade were examined through the frequency of teacher- and child-initiated interactions in third grade, and teacher-child relationship quality in first grade (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). This revealed that teachers' perceptions of relationship quality in first grade predicted their perceptions of relationship quality in third grade. While preschool teachers are more likely to initiate interactions with shyer children than those who were less shy, shyer children initiate fewer interactions with teachers.

It is this lack of interaction from the child's side that appears critical. Shyer children may have difficulty forming close relationships with teachers because they are unlikely to initiate interactions with their teachers (Rudasill & Rimm-Kaufman, 2009). There is some suggestion that this may be moderated by the gender of the child and the teacher's own level of shyness (Coplan, et al., 2011).

A recent study found that close teacher-child relationships appeared to be a positive moderator of shy children's school adjustment (Arbeau, et al., 2010). Shyness was significantly and negatively related to close teacher-child relationships and significantly and positively related to dependent teacher-child relationships. In children with lower levels of teacher-child closeness, shyness was increasingly related to self-reported school avoidance, teacher-rated anxiety, and teacher-rated social withdrawal. However, increasing levels of teacher-child closeness moderated these associations. The role of the teacher in developing a

positive relationship appears critical. Shy children who form close but non-dependent relationships with their first grade teacher may be protected against some of the negative outcomes typically experienced by many shy children at school. The formation of a dependent teacher-child relationship may be especially problematic. It has been suggested that peers may exclude shy children with strong attachments to their teacher simply because these children spend most of their time with their teacher this amount of time restricts social exploration by shy children (Arbeau, et al., 2010).

New Zealand schools and social withdrawal

There is no clear pathway of identification, assessment and treatment for New Zealand children with socially withdrawn behaviour. A search for information about the ways in which schools deal with socially withdrawn children in New Zealand returned very little. Children may receive support if their behaviour is severe enough, or if it is co-morbid with externalising behaviour. However, access to services is far from equitable or assured, and this has implications for schools in the way they recognise internalising behaviours and provide appropriate support.

New Zealand primary schools use a curriculum that emphasises the importance of 'relating to others' and 'participating and contributing' as two of the five 'key competencies' that all children work toward across all curriculum areas (Ministry of Education, 2007). This expresses a certain value that is placed on these social competencies, nevertheless, schools are free to incorporate and assess these in their own way.

There is currently one point in a New Zealand child's education at which they will be screened for range of emotional and behavioural difficulties. Pro-social behaviour, hyperactivity, emotional symptoms, conduct and peer disorders are all measured as part of the Strength and difficulties questionnaire (SDQ) in recently established 'B4 school' health checks (Goodman, Ford, Simmons, Gatward, & Meltzer, 2000). The SDQ is in widespread use internationally, and reportedly identifies over 70% of individuals with conduct, hyperactivity, depressive and some anxiety disorders (Goodman, et al., 2000). As B4 school checks were only launched in 2008, it is not yet known whether socially withdrawn children in New Zealand are likely to be referred for assistance as a result of the SDQ. However,

standard practice is to refer children with 'concerning' scores in any category to a paediatrician, a child mental health specialist or the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services, or Group Special Education (GSE).

Little is known about typical pathways for socially withdrawn children in New Zealand schools. Guidelines for Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs), or for Special Education funding under 'Special Education 2000' guidelines, do not exclude providing services for children or adolescents who are socially withdrawn, although are typically used to service children with more complex needs. Special Education 2000 defined four types of behaviour as indicators of high behaviour needs, one of which could apply to socially withdrawn children; 'behaviour that interferes with social acceptance, personal well-being and educational performance' (Ministry of Education, 1995). RTLBs have the option of referring children with internalising presentations on to mental health agencies or counseling services, though intervention will not be within the context of the school environment, where assistance specific to the child's learning environment can best be provided.

An increasing concern with mental health issues in New Zealand children seems to be present. Comparisons with international figures in these early stages of B4 school checks indicate that New Zealand children have been assessed as having higher rates of difficulty with conduct and relating to their peers than international averages (Tuohy, 2010). In the period B4 school health checks have been in operation, Pharmac figures show a 140 per cent increase in antidepressant prescriptions for 0 to 4-year-olds between 2009 and 2010, and an average 10 per cent increase in mood-stabilising drug prescriptions in the last five years for children aged five and over (Neale, 2012). Debate about the advisability of detecting mental illness in young children, and about how to best assist young children with difficulties seems likely in coming years, as more data is released about the B4 school health checks.

Factors relating to positive life outcomes for withdrawn children

There are many factors that may act protectively for a shy or unsociable child. While individual trajectories may have very little in common, some factors that have been mentioned in the research that relate specifically to positive life

outcomes for withdrawn children are resilience, intelligence and social competence. The degree to which a withdrawn child has any of these qualities, or is perceived to have these qualities, may be significant in terms of the likelihood they will avoid negative social and emotional outcomes.

Resilience

Resilience refers to a pattern of positive adaptation in adverse circumstances (Dougherty Wright & Masten, 2005). Interpersonal strengths, external supports and social interpersonal skills are said to make up resilient factors. The International Resilience Project lists autonomous, achievement-oriented, hopeful, empathetic and persistent as interpersonal strengths in resilient children (Grotberg, 1995). Another way resilience is commonly conceptualised is as a set of protective factors that allow successful adaptation in the face of risk. Some of these factors are characteristics of the child, such as a positive outlook on life, or faith, while others are situated in the family or community (a stable home environment, positive sibling relationships, a safe neighbourhood and affordable housing).

Resilience may be an important factor in children who becomes less socially withdrawn over time. Degnan and Fox reviewed a number of studies that looked at the stability of behavioral inhibition through childhood, finding that, while some studies find that it is a very stable trait, there is also evidence for discontinuity of this trait, with infants and toddlers who were extremely inhibited displaying less withdrawn social behavior as school-age children or adolescents. They describe the way in which such factors as the development of adaptive attention and regulatory skills, the influence of particular styles of parenting or caregiving contexts, and individual characteristics of the child may function as examples of the resilience process (Degnan & Fox, 2007).

Rothbart's theory of temperament (Rothbart, 2004) is a potentially useful way to understand how social withdrawal may impact on the resilience of a child. It can be used as a framework for understanding connections between individual differences, resilience, and gene-environment transactions (Deater-Deckard, Ivy, & Smith, 2005). The first dimension of this, 'extraversion/ surgency' incorporates activity levels, positive affect, levels of shyness, and positive anticipation /

approach. Higher levels are associated with externalising problems like acting out, but less with internalising problems. Children who often experience and express positive moods are less likely to suffer the consequences of exposure to risk factors (Deater-Deckard, et al., 2005).

The second dimension is negative affect and includes fear, discomfort and sadness, of which, fear is associated with internalising difficulties. Genetic factors are thought to account for one third to two thirds of the variance in negative affectivity (Deater-Deckard, et al., 2005). Children who are low in negative affectivity are less likely to show maladjustment in the face of difficult circumstances. The third is effortful control and concerns the degree to which a child can focus attention. Effortful control is thought to be an important component of resilience. It may moderate the extent to which negative affect can lead to internalising problems as it can influence the degree to which a child can regulate negative emotions. Children high on both negative affect and effortful control, show decreased internalising problems (Deater-Deckard, et al., 2005).

In short, socially withdrawn children may be at greater risk of behaving in a non-resilient way to stressful situations. Adaptable, self-regulated and happy children who seek out social interaction are more likely to seek the attention of others to assist them with difficult situations. Socially withdrawn children are not likely to behave this way, however, if a high degree of effortful control is present, this may moderate the effects of negative affect.

Intelligence / Predicting academic and career success

Intelligence is an interesting construct to consider in relation to social withdrawal as researchers have consistently shown that teachers perceive shy children as less intelligent than their peers (Bell, 1995; Coplan, et al., 2011). Shyness seems to affect academic success, though the reasons for this are not well understood. What seems clear is that teacher perceptions of the intelligence of children is likely to affect how they provide for them, and that socially withdrawn children are at risk in this respect.

One explanation for lowered academic achievement in shy children was explored in a study exploring relations between shyness, academic achievement and academic engagement, (Hughes & Coplan, 2010). This study found that

shyness was negatively related to academic achievement, especially when teacher ratings were used. Given that academic achievement only seemed to be affected when teacher ratings of performance were used, rather than standardised testing, results indicated that teacher bias contributed to these lower teacher ratings. Results indicated that academic engagement was the likely contributor to this bias, with teachers rating shy children as less likely to achieve academically because they were not as engaged with learning.

Intelligence has been used to describe and incorporate a wide variety of phenomena, including the ability to understand complex ideas, to adapt effectively to the environment, to reason effectively, and to overcome obstacles by thought (Neisser, et al., 1996). 'Intelligence' as we have traditionally understood it, is somewhat likely to predict success in a school environment, with a correlation between IQ scores and grades of .50 (Neisser, et al., 1996), but becomes less useful when predicting later academic or career success. Robert Sternberg has developed a triarchic theory of intelligence, consisting of 'practical', 'analytical' and 'creative', of which only analytical can be measured through a traditional intelligence test (Sternberg, 2003), which he claims is better able to predict both academic and career success. More recently he has considered a fourth component of 'wisdom' an important factor, as part of his 'WICS' model (Wisdom, Intelligence, Creativity, Synthesised). At present there is no research incorporating an understanding of this type of 'intelligence' and how it may relate to typical patterns of strength or weakness in socially withdrawn children, or in teacher perceptions of these strengths or weaknesses.

Social competence

To engage with the potential support of peers, adequate social competence is necessary. Social competence consists of prosocial behaviours, such as turn-taking, sharing, communicating and cooperative interaction patterns, as well as an absence of antisocial and asocial behaviours (Ladd, et al., 2012). 'Social skills' and 'social competence' seem to be almost interchangeable terms, but in the case of social withdrawal the distinction may be important. 'Social skills' are the behaviours that contribute to social competence. The term incorporates a wide variety of skills under emotional (impulse control, emotional expression),

behavioural (eye contact, assertion) and cognitive (self-monitoring, interpersonal perspective taking) domains. The broader term, 'Social competence', is an evaluation of the success of an individual in social situations (Greene, Hariton, Robins, & Flye, 2011).

A socially withdrawn child may have social skills, but may not be adept at utilising them, and may therefore not be 'socially competent'. Adjectives such as empathetic, conscientious, cooperative, assertive and self-controlled to describe socially competent children (Rudasill & Konold, 2008). For many children, social skills and social competence go together, but a shy child may have social skills, but feel unable to use them. Similarly, an unsociable child may exhibit social skills in some contexts, but display little evidence of social competence in a classroom setting. Social competence and social acceptance are strongly associated, suggesting that socially competent behaviours may reduce the risk of the peer rejection that can be associated with shyness (Miller & Coll, 2007).

Rudasill and Konold (2008) examined the contribution of children's temperament to teacher ratings of social competence from kindergarten to second grade. Teachers rated each child's behavioural frequency on three subscales of a social skills questionnaire: cooperation, assertion, and self-control, which were compared to mother-ratings of shyness, inhibitory control and attentional focussing at 4 1/2 years. Teachers rated shy children high on cooperation and self-control, two of the social competence subscales, but lower on assertiveness. While bolder children were overall likely to have higher assertion ratings, when shyer children had greater attentional focusing, they were also likely to have higher assertion ratings. This indicates that the tendency to attentively focus and observe a situation act as a coping mechanism and protective factor for some shy children.

Manualised social skills programmes are often seen as a solution to a socially withdrawn child's behaviour. There appears to be an increasing tendency for researchers to point out that there is little benefit in applying such a programme without considering the mixture of social strengths and weaknesses each individual has (Coplan, et al., 2004; Gazelle, 2010). As yet there seems to be little understanding of whether teachers are good judges of the social competence of socially withdrawn children, and how teacher perceptions of the social competence of socially withdrawn children may affect their treatment of them.

Research questions

The review of the literature lead to the formulation of three research questions:

- What characteristics do teachers attribute to children as a function of the child's type of withdrawal and their gender?
- What are teacher beliefs in regards to the attributions of the behaviour and the negative consequences of the behaviour?
- What areas of pedagogical practice do teachers identify as being appropriate for modifying the behaviour of both types of socially withdrawn children?

CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter introduces the research methods and conceptual framework used for this research. The primary goal of this study was to test the research questions relating to teacher perceptions of socially withdrawn behaviour and pedagogical practice as stated in Chapter II. The methodology used to test these questions is presented in the following sections: participants, research paradigm, survey, procedure and data analysis.

Participants

From a total of 140 responses to the survey, 97 were usable. Six people responded that they did not consent to participate, while 37 indicated consent but failed to complete the survey. The gender, age and teaching experience of the 97 respondents are shown in table 3.0.

Table 3.0: Demographic characteristics of participants (n=97)

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Categories</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
Gender	Male	10	10
	Female	87	90
Age	<30 years old	16	17
	30-39 years old	28	30
	40-49 years old	22	23
	50-59 years old	23	24
	60+ years old	6	6
Years Teaching	<6 years	23	24
	6-19 years	50	52
	20+ years	23	24
	Not answered	1	1

As may be seen, the respondents were mostly female and predominantly in the 30-60 year age group, figures which parallels the New Zealand teacher population, which is 82% female and where 58% of teachers are aged between the ages of 40 and 59 (Demographic and Statistical Analysis Unit, 2005). Not unexpectedly, years of teaching service was closely aligned with age, with the

mean length of service being 13.65 years.

Research Paradigm

A primarily quantitative approach was considered desirable for this research out of a need to compare the current results to those of Arbeau and Coplan, who explored very similar research questions, but with kindergarten teachers as participants (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007). Because similar research has not been undertaken in New Zealand, it was also important to identify any potential differences between the ways New Zealand teachers might view social withdrawal, and teachers from international research have.

A combination of highly structured, closed questions, and open-ended questions was used in this research. Closed questions were necessary in that they generate frequencies of response, allowing comparisons across groups in the sample (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Open-ended questions were used as a part of the survey design in order to identify themes the teachers identified as important, and to gather more detailed responses. Open-ended questions are considered a suitable way of eliciting information in cases where possible answers are unknown, or the research is exploratory, and may capture the 'authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour... which are the hallmarks of qualitative data' (Cohen, et al., 2007). They were included in the survey design due to the exploratory nature of this research in the New Zealand setting, and the uncertainty about how New Zealand teachers would see their own pedagogical practice.

Survey

A survey was used as the means of collecting data from teachers. The strengths of a survey are in its 'appeal to generalisability or universality within given parameters, its ability to make general statements which are supported by large data banks, and its ability to establish the degree of confidence which can be placed in a set of findings' (Cohen, et al., 2007). The survey (see appendix A) was developed by the author to address the research questions of this study, and was described to teachers as a survey investigating 'peer relationships'. Teachers were asked to respond to a vignette about the behaviour of a hypothetical male/ female, shy/ unsociable child, with four variations of the questionnaire presented

depending on the vignette, which were randomly distributed using Survey Monkey. This resulted in a similar numbers of respondents for each vignette: Male Shy (22), Female Shy (27), Male Unsociable (23), and Female Unsociable (25). Vignettes presented to teachers used no labels to categorise behaviour, and only differed in the described gender of the child, and whether the child was described as anxious when joining in social activities, or not anxious when joining in social activities. Vignettes were based on the definitions of the two types of socially withdrawn children provided by Coplan and Rubin (2010).

One of the difficulties in interpreting current research into differences in shy and unsociable children is that the vignettes used have tended to use descriptions that differ on more than one feature, so that the researcher cannot be certain what word or phrase the participant is reacting to (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan, et al., 2007). For example, Coplan (2007) varied the vignette for males and females with the same kind of withdrawal, making it difficult to know whether differences across vignettes arose from the different kinds of withdrawal or the different wordings of the vignettes:

Unsociable boy: 'Henry is playing quietly away from the other children. He does not appear anxious or upset. If left undisturbed Henry would happily continue playing on his own. You have seen Henry behave similarly on other occasions.'

Unsociable girl: 'Caitlin is playing alone, drawing a picture with some crayons. She seems to be quite content in this activity, and does not often initiate play with the other children. You have seen her engage in this type of behaviour in the past'.

An effort was made in the current research to use vignettes with minimal variations, ensuring that the participant reacts to only one feature of the description. The vignettes used can be seen in figure 3.0.

Imagine a male child in your classroom. He tends not to volunteer to speak in class, and rarely participates or contributes when working in groups with other children. He seems to prefer not to join in with social activities, but doesn't seem anxious when he does so. (*male / unsociable*)

Imagine a female child in your classroom. She tends not to volunteer to speak in class, and rarely participates or contributes when working in groups with other children. She seems to prefer not to join in with social activities, but doesn't seem anxious when she does so. (*female / unsociable*)

Imagine a male child in your classroom. He tends not to volunteer to speak in class, and rarely participates or contributes when working in groups with other children. He seems to prefer not to join in with social activities, and seems anxious when he does so. (*male / shy*)

Imagine a female child in your classroom. She tends not to volunteer to speak in class, and rarely participates or contributes when working in groups with other children. She seems to prefer not to join in with social activities, and seems anxious when she does so. (*female / shy*)

Figure 3.0: Vignettes used in online survey

Six teachers were involved in the development of the survey instrument, and modifications were made based on their experience of completing the survey. The teachers offered useful feedback about the order of questions, the ease of following directions, and their understanding of what information the questions were attempting to elicit. They also confirmed that the scales could be used appropriately and that the vignettes made sense.

The survey was administered online using Survey Monkey (SurveyMonkey.com, none). Once participants clicked on the survey link contained in the text of their e-mail, they accessed the first page of the survey. This included a description of the research, ethical, privacy and consent procedures. Teachers wishing to proceed gave electronic consent by clicking 'agree', and were taken to the second page, containing all of the survey questions. Teachers could decline participation by clicking 'disagree', which took them to an exit page.

Question 1 – Negative costs and attributions

Questions in this section explored teacher perceptions of the negative cost and attributions of the socially withdrawn behaviour described in the vignette. Participants were asked to select on a scale of 1-6 (1= strongly disagree, 6=

strongly agree), to what extent they agreed with the following statements in relation to the vignette child:

- *This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child's social development*
- *This child might act this way on purpose*
- *This behaviour is unlikely to change*
- *This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way*
- *This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child's academic development*
- *This child may be going through a stage or phase that will end*

Responses to “This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child’s social / academic development” were combined to create a scale of ‘negative cost’. This was modeled on the investigation into Canadian kindergarten teacher’s beliefs regarding hypothetical prosocial, asocial and antisocial children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007), in which a scale of negative cost was created using the same statements. The remaining four questions in the first section were used to consider how teachers viewed the behaviour in terms of stability (stable or a stage), controllability (intentional or unintentional), and disposition (part of the child’s disposition or situation-dependent). Again, this was modelled on statements posed by Arbeau and Coplan (2007). In the present sample, internal consistency estimates for these 4 items across vignettes did not support aggregation. Thus, items were considered separately.

Question 2 - Characteristics

This question explored teacher perceptions of a range of characteristics that may apply to socially withdrawn children. Some related to ‘resilience’, ‘intelligence’ and ‘social competence’, and others provided a range of other personality characteristics that might be associated with withdrawal. Participants were asked to rate, on a scale of 1-6 (1= strongly disagree, 6= strongly agree) how likely they thought each of the following characteristics would apply to the child described.

<i>autonomous</i>	<i>creative</i>	<i>hopeful</i>	<i>conscientious</i>
<i>resilient</i>	<i>analytical</i>	<i>empathetic</i>	<i>assertive</i>
<i>achievement-oriented</i>	<i>cooperative</i>	<i>persistent</i>	<i>self-controlled</i>
<i>wise</i>	<i>capable</i>	<i>intelligent</i>	<i>happy</i>
	<i>self-confident</i>	<i>practical</i>	

Responses to the adjective 'resilient' were considered to explore teacher perceptions of resilience in withdrawn children. To consider teacher perceptions of withdrawn children's intelligence, the characteristic 'intelligent' was used. To allow comparison, the components of Robert Sternberg's triarchic theory of intelligence and 'WICS' model; 'practical', 'wise', 'analytical' 'intelligent' and 'creative', (Sternberg, 2003, 2010), were combined in a scale. To determine the reliability of these adjectives being used as a scale, a reliability analysis was undertaken. A Cronbach's alpha of .803 (for 5 items) indicated good internal consistency. Three further adjectives; 'cooperative', 'assertive', and 'self-controlled' were considered to examine teacher perceptions of social competence in withdrawn children. These were taken from a teacher rating scale of social competence used by Rudasill and Konold (2008). In the present sample, internal consistency estimates for these items across vignettes did not support aggregation. Thus, items were considered separately.

Question 3 – Self-reported pedagogical practice

Open-ended questions were designed to explore teachers' pedagogical practices and are listed below:

- *What additional support or resources would you try to access for this child, if any?*
- *What would you need to consider when working with a child like this, if anything?*
- *What strategies would you consider using to develop this child's peer relationships, if any?*

A final open-ended question encouraged teachers to comment on their answers or provide anecdotes from their own experience.

- *Do you have additional comments that relate to your answers, or on your experiences teaching a child like the one described?*

Question 4 - Demographics

Demographic data was collected on the gender of the teacher, their age group, and number of completed years of teaching service.

Procedure

The researcher sent a letter to school principals to introduce the research (appendix B). This was followed by an email sent to school administrators 4 days

later, unless principals had first made contact to decline participation. The e-mail contained a brief description of the research and an electronic survey link, and requested that it be forwarded to all classroom teachers at the school.

Initially all possible schools in the Dunedin area were approached. As more responses were needed, schools from around much of the South Island were also contacted. One Dunedin school was approached directly, in order to gather more survey responses. The research was introduced at a staff meeting and 6 printed surveys completed. An identical version to the online version was presented and an effort was made to keep conditions as similar to online as possible, especially in regards to not sharing information about the different vignette presentations before the survey was completed.

The school sample was diverse. A mix of urban, suburban and rural areas were used across the South Island, which included schools with a wide range of decile rankings, cultural make-up and size. Schools with fewer than 80 students were not considered candidates for the sample. Area schools and full primary schools were also excluded from the sample, as they include Year 7 and 8 students. The sample was assumed to represent a group of educators diverse in age, ethnicity, gender, and experience level. A response rate was difficult to determine, given that it is not known how many school principals decided to pass the survey on to teachers at their school. From communication with principals it is known that 15 declined to participate and that 18 forwarded the survey on to teachers, but it is not known whether or not many other principals decided to forward the e-mail on to staff. It is worth noting that a low response rate is common in such studies, as is the rate of completion of the survey in its entirety (Reips, 2002).

Finally, the study was conducted in accordance with recommended ethical practice. The Massey University 'Code of Ethical Conduct for Research, Teaching and Evaluations involving Human Participants' (Massey University, 2010) and the New Zealand Psychologist's Code of Ethics (Code of Ethics Review Group, 2002) were considered in regards to this research. A 'Notification of Low Risk Research/Evaluation involving human participants' application was completed and accepted by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee (appendix C).

Data Analysis

Results from the survey were exported to SPSS 20.0 software for Mac (SPSS Inc., 2011) for analysis. One respondent's results in each set of questions were ignored from analysis for failing to complete most or all items. Out of remaining 2232 data points, 17 were missing (0.8%). For isolated missing data points it was first established that missing data points were spread over all vignette groups, and each respondent's pattern of response did not look atypical, then the mean question score for their group's vignette was used. A table representing demographic characteristics of participants was obtained from the SPSS program.

Preliminary analyses were undertaken to determine whether scores on the survey questions were influenced by the gender of the participating teachers, the age of the teacher, or the teaching experience of the teacher. For each of these three analyses, an independent 2x2x2 analysis of variance was performed for all 6 statements relating to the child in the vignette and for all 18 characteristics (adjectives) relating to the child.

MANOVAs were conducted on scores given to the 18 adjectives, the stability of behaviour, and scores given for the scale of negative costs. Following significant MANOVAs for the 18 adjectives and negative costs, separate 2 (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) analyses of variance were undertaken on each item. A one-way ANOVA was undertaken for responses to the single items measuring 'controllability' and 'disposition'.

Answers to open-ended questions were coded post-hoc by grouping together responses with similar themes. Analysis for themes in open-ended questions followed procedures suggested by Howitt and Cramer (2010) for thematic analysis, a commonly used method of qualitative analysis. Coding the data involved applying brief verbal descriptions to chunks of data. Once coding was complete, themes that integrate substantial sets of these codings were identified. A continuous process of alteration and modification of the coding and analysis is an essential part of thematic analysis, as ideas develop (Howitt & Cramer, 2010). Giving numerical indications of the incidence and prevalence of each theme in the data is an accepted part of thematic analysis.

CHAPTER IV RESULTS

Preliminary Analyses

Gender

Preliminary analyses were undertaken to determine whether scores on the survey questions were influenced by the gender of the participating teachers. Independent 2 (Teacher Gender) x 2 (Vignette Gender) x 2 (Vignette withdrawal-type) analyses of variance were performed on agreement scores for all 6 statements relating to the child in the vignette and for all 18 characteristics (adjectives) relating to the child.

There were no significant ($p < .05$) gender or interaction effects associated with the analyses of the 6 statement scores. There were three significant ($p < .05$) main effects for gender among the 18 adjective scores. Female teachers were more likely than males to rate the child in the vignette as creative and analytic, while males were more likely to rate the child as hopeful. There were also four significant ($p < .05$) interaction effects involving teacher gender. However, all of these effects were compromised by the small number of male teachers (two of the vignette gender x type of withdrawal groups contained only one male). None of the effects just noted were significant when the significance level was adjusted for the number of comparisons performed. In view of the lack of significant effects associated with teacher gender, and the relatively small number of male teachers in the sample, further analysis of gender effects was discontinued.

Age

Similar, preliminary analyses were undertaken to determine whether scores on the survey questions were influenced by the age of participating teachers. Teachers were grouped into three age sets, under 30 ($n=16$), 30-49 ($n=50$) and 50 and over ($n=28$). Independent 3 (Teacher Age) x 2 (Vignette Gender) x 2 (Vignette withdrawal-type) analyses of variance were performed on agreement scores for all 6 statements relating to the child in the vignette and for all 18 adjectives.

There were no significant ($p < .05$) teacher age or interaction effects associated with the analyses of the 6 statement scores. There were also no significant main effects for teacher age on any of the 18 adjective scores. However, there were significant ($p < .05$) interaction effects involving teacher age X vignette withdrawal- type for four of the adjectives, 'resilient', 'cooperative', 'conscientious' and 'hopeful'.

Younger teachers (< 30 years old) were more likely than older groups of teachers to rate shy children as less conscientious than unsociable children. On the other hand, older teachers (> 50) were more likely than younger groups of teachers to rate shy children as more cooperative, more hopeful and more resilient than unsociable children. These significant interaction effects were compromised by the small number of young teachers ($n = 6$) who responded to the 'shy' vignette, and also by the fact that the interactions would not have been statistically significant had the significance level of $p = .05$ been adjusted for the number of comparisons made on the same data set. For these reasons the age of the teachers was not included in the analyses associated with the main research questions of the study.

Teaching Experience

Similar analyses to those just reported were also undertaken to determine whether scores on the survey questions were influenced by the classroom experience of participating teachers. Teachers were recoded into three experience groups; under 6 years experience ($n=23$), 6 to 19 years experience ($n=49$) and over 20 years experience ($n=23$). Independent 3 (Teacher Experience) x 2 (Vignette Gender) x 2 (Vignette withdrawal-type) analyses of variance were performed on agreement scores for all 6 statements relating to the child and for all 18 adjectives.

There was one significant ($p < .05$) main effect for teaching experience among the 6 statements. For the statement 'This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way', the most experienced teachers (>20 years) gave higher ratings, indicating stronger agreement. There was also one significant ($p < .05$) main effect for teaching experience among the 18 adjective scores. The

most experienced teachers (>20 years) were more likely to think the child was resilient.

There were a total of three interaction effects. For the statement ‘This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way’, the most experienced teachers gave higher ratings in agreement for shy children, but less experienced teachers (<20 years) gave higher ratings for unsociable children. For the adjective ‘cooperative’, the least experienced teachers (<6 years) gave the highest ratings for unsociable children, whereas the most experienced teachers (>20 years) gave the highest rating for shy children. For the adjective ‘conscientious’ the most experienced teachers (>20 years) gave higher ratings for female children. For male children similar ratings were given across all three experience groupings.

One of these results, for ‘cooperative’, paralleled the results found in the analyses reported above concerning the age of the teachers. These parallels were not surprising since teacher age and years of classroom experience are correlated variables. Because of the small number of significant main effects, and significant interaction effects involving experience, and that the interactions would not have been statistically significant had the significance level of $p = .05$ been adjusted for the number of comparisons made on the same data set, the experience of the teachers was not included in the analyses associated with the main research questions of the study.

Research Question 1

What characteristics do teachers attribute to children as a function of the child’s type of withdrawal and their gender?

To investigate whether there were differences in the teachers’ perceptions of the applicability of the adjectives to the type of withdrawal and gender of the child, a 2 (Type of Withdrawal) x 2 (Gender) multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted on the scores given to the 18 adjectives.

Prior to conducting the MANOVA, a series of Pearson correlations were performed between all dependent variables in order to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be correlated with each other in the moderate range (i.e., .20 - .60; Meyers, Gampst, & Guarino, 2006). 76% of

correlations showed a meaningful pattern between dependent variables, suggesting the appropriateness of a MANOVA. Using an alpha level of .001 to evaluate homogeneity assumptions, Box's M test of homogeneity of covariance was significant ($p = .000$), therefore the assumption of homogeneity of covariances was violated, but because sample sizes were almost equal, this test was ignored. Levene's homogeneity of variance test was statistically significant for the 'achievement-oriented' dependent variable only ($p < .01$).

Significant main effects were found for both type of withdrawal (Wilks' $\Lambda = .554$, $F=3.36$, $p < .001$) and for gender (Wilks' $\Lambda = .690$, $F= 1.87$ $p < .05$). However, the interaction of the two was not statistically significant (Wilks' $\Lambda = .835$, $F=.824$, $p=.67$).

Following the significant MANOVA, a separate 2 (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) analysis of variance was undertaken for scores on each of the 18 adjectives. No significant univariate main effects for gender were found on any of the adjectives. A significant univariate main effect of withdrawal type was observed for the following adjectives: resilient ($F(3,92) = 19.7$, $p < .001$), self-confident ($F(3,92) = 6.0$, $p < .05$), and intelligent ($F(3,92) = 8.0$, $p < .01$). Additionally, the main effect for withdrawal type for the adjective 'happy' approached significance, ($F(3,92) = 3.7$, $p=.056$).

One main effect for gender for 'achievement-oriented' approached significance, ($F(3,92) = 2.8$, $p=.094$), but was disregarded, because Levene's homogeneity of variance test was statistically significant for this adjective.

Withdrawal type x gender interaction was found for the adjective 'empathetic', $F(3,92) = 7.7$, $p < .01$. Finally, the interaction effect for four adjectives also approached significance; 'practical' ($F(3,92) = 3.4$, $p=.067$), 'capable' ($F(3,92) = 3.0$, $p=.087$), 'resilient' ($F(3,92) = 2.8$, $p=.094$), and 'wise' ($F(3,92) = 3.1$, $p=.083$). The mean scores (and standard deviations) associated with the analyses just described are shown in table 4.0. The characteristics are listed in order of increasing positivity as judged by the total mean score for each adjective. That is, teachers were least positive about the social characteristics of assertiveness and self-confidence of the withdrawn child, and most positive about their cognitive characteristics of intelligence, capability and analytical skills.

Table 4.0: Mean Scores (and Standard Deviations) for Child Characteristics as a Function of their Type of Withdrawal and Gender.

	Unsociable		Shy		Total	Sig*
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
Assertive	2.62 (.98)	2.48 (1.16)	2.24 (1.36)	2.27 (1.12)	2.41 (1.16)	
Self-Confident	2.69 (1.15)	3.39 (1.03)	2.44 (1.47)	2.41 (1.18)	2.73 (1.27)	*1
Cooperative	3.31 (1.23)	3.39 (1.20)	3.56 (1.47)	2.91 (1.27)	3.30 (1.30)	
Empathetic	3.08 (1.19)	3.43 (1.16)	3.92 (1.32)	2.91 (1.19)	3.34 (1.25)	*3
Hopeful	3.19 (.90)	3.43 (.95)	3.36 (1.07)	3.45 (.91)	3.35 (.95)	
Happy	3.65 (1.02)	3.70 (1.02)	3.48 (1.16)	3.05 (.95)	3.48 (1.06)	(*1)
Persistent	3.31 (1.19)	3.91 (1.08)	3.32 (1.38)	3.45 (1.26)	3.49 (1.24)	
Resilient	3.81 (1.17)	4.26 (1.05)	3.12 (1.59)	2.73 (.94)	3.49 (1.34)	*1, (*3)
Achievement-oriented	3.35 (.69)	3.78 (1.09)	3.37 (1.41)	3.68 (1.08)	3.53 (1.09)	
Wise	3.27 (1.00)	3.74 (1.01)	3.88 (1.17)	3.55 (1.30)	3.60 (1.13)	(*3)
Practical	3.27 (1.12)	3.74 (1.01)	4.04 (1.06)	3.68 (1.17)	3.68 (1.11)	(*3)
Conscientious	3.62 (1.20)	3.61 (1.08)	4.32 (1.25)	3.68 (1.17)	3.81 (1.20)	
Creative	3.88 (.86)	4.13 (1.06)	4.12 (1.05)	3.82 (1.22)	3.99 (1.04)	
Autonomous	4.50 (.95)	4.09 (1.31)	4.00 (1.15)	3.82 (1.33)	4.11 (1.20)	
Analytical	3.88 (.95)	4.35 (1.07)	4.16 (1.25)	4.36 (1.14)	4.18 (1.10)	
Capable	4.12 (.71)	4.13 (.81)	4.60 (1.04)	3.95 (1.13)	4.21 (.95)	(*3)
Self-controlled	4.31 (.93)	4.17 (1.23)	4.52 (1.16)	3.48 (1.16)	4.27 (1.11)	
Intelligent	3.96 (.92)	4.13 (.55)	4.72 (1.02)	4.36 (.85)	4.29 (.89)	*1

*Significance: 1 = Type of Withdrawal, 2 = Gender, 3 = Type x Gender

(*) = approaching significance, $p < .1$

In brief, the univariate analyses indicated that teachers rated shy children as having lower self-confidence ($M = 2.43$ $SD = 1.33$) than unsociable children ($M = 3.02$, $SD = 1.15$). Teachers rated unsociable children as being more 'resilient' ($M = 4.02$, $SD = 1.13$) than shy children ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.33$), and teachers rated shy children as more intelligent ($M = 4.55$, $SD = .95$) than unsociable children ($M =$

4.04, SD = .76). As noted above, there was a non-significant tendency ($p < .06$) for teachers to rate unsociable children as happier ($M = 3.67$, $SD = 1.01$) than shy children ($M = 3.28$, $SD = 1.08$).

The single significant interaction effect resulted from teachers rating shy female children ($M = 3.92$, $SD = 1.32$) as most empathetic and shy male children the least empathetic ($M=2.91$, $SD=1.19$) across the four withdrawal-by-gender groups. There were four additional interaction effects that approached significance. They were for resilient, for which unsociable boys were rated the most resilient ($M=4.26$, $SD=1.05$) but shy boys the least resilient ($M=2.72$, $SD=.94$); wise, for which shy boys were rated most wise ($M=3.88$, $SD=1.17$) but unsociable boys rated least wise ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.00$); practical, for which shy girls were rated most practical ($M=4.04$, $SD=1.06$), but unsociable girls rated least practical ($M=3.27$, $SD=1.12$); and capable, for which shy girls were rated most capable ($M=4.60$, $SD=1.04$), but shy boys rated least practical ($M=3.95$, $SD=1.13$). In order of increasing positivity teachers did not appear to differentiate by type of withdrawal or gender for the characteristics of assertiveness, cooperation, hopefulness, persistence, achievement-orientation, wisdom, practicality, conscientiousness, creativity, autonomy, analysis and capability of withdrawn children.

Intelligence

As previously observed, of all 18 adjectives, 'intelligent' received the highest mean scores, meaning that respondents attributed this characteristic to withdrawn children more than any of the others. Two separate measures of intelligence were used to examine this characteristic further. Firstly, the adjective 'intelligent' was one of the 18 adjectives teachers were asked to respond to. The list of adjectives also included 'practical, creative, wise and analytical'. Each participant's scores on the five adjectives were added together to provide a subscale score of 'intelligence' as proposed by Sternberg (2010). This was to test if a more encompassing measure of predicting both academic and career success, would yield different results across vignette withdrawal type and gender. The mean scores for each adjective are represented in table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Mean scores (standard deviations) for adjectives relating to ‘intelligence’ across vignette gender and withdrawal type.

	Female Unsociable	Male Unsociable	Female Shy	Male Shy	TOTAL	Sig
Wise	3.27 (1.00)	3.74 (1.01)	3.88 (1.17)	3.55 (1.30)	3.60 (1.13)	(*3)
Practical	3.27 (1.12)	3.74 (1.01)	4.04 (1.06)	3.68 (1.17)	3.68 (1.11)	(*3)
Creative	3.88 (.86)	4.13 (1.06)	4.12 (1.05)	3.82 (1.22)	3.99 (1.04)	
Analytical	3.88 (.95)	4.35 (1.07)	4.16 (1.25)	4.36 (1.14)	4.18 (1.10)	
Intelligent	3.96 (.92)	4.13 (.55)	4.72 (1.02)	4.36 (.85)	4.29 (.89)	*1
combined:	18.36 (3.63)	20.09 (3.26)	20.73 (3.96)	19.77 (4.74)	19.74 (3.96)	(*3)

Significance: 1 = Type of Withdrawal, 2 = Gender, 3 = Type x Gender

(*) = approaching significance, $p < .1$

A separate 2 (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) analysis of variance was undertaken for the new scale, comprised of ‘intelligent’, ‘creative’, ‘analytical’, ‘wise’, and ‘practical’. No significant univariate main effects for vignette gender or vignette withdrawal type were found. The interaction effect approached significance, ($F = 3.46$, $p = .066$). Because the pattern of responses for the adjective ‘analytical’ was different than the others (with the highest ratings for males), a separate 2 (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) analysis of variance was undertaken for the combination of the four variables without ‘analytical’. The interaction effect for this was significant ($F = 4.49$, $p < .05$).

For ‘wise’, ‘practical’ and ‘intelligent’, shy females were rated highest and unsociable females lowest. The same was true for the 5 adjectives combined. There was a similar pattern for ‘creative’; shy female children and male unsociable children received similar high ratings, while the other two groups received similar low ratings.

Overall, shy females were considered the most intelligent when ‘intelligent’ was considered as a separate adjective, as well as most likely to succeed

academically or in careers, as predicted by Sternberg’s model of intelligence. On both these same measures, unsociable female children were rated lowest.

Social Competence

Teacher perceptions of three key social competencies; ‘cooperation’, ‘assertion’, and ‘self-control’ were examined, as used in teacher rating scales of social competence by Rudasill and Konold (2008). Mean ratings for each adjective by vignette withdrawal type and gender are listed in table 4.2.

Table 4.2: Mean scores (standard deviations) for adjectives relating to ‘social competence’ across vignette gender and withdrawal type.

	Female Unsociable	Male Unsociable	Female Shy	Male Shy	TOTAL
Assertive	2.62 (.98)	2.48 (1.16)	2.24 (1.36)	2.27 (1.12)	2.41 (1.16)
Self-controlled	4.31 (.93)	4.17 (1.23)	4.52 (1.16)	3.48 (1.16)	4.27 (1.11)
Cooperative	3.31 (1.23)	3.39 (1.20)	3.56 (1.47)	2.91 (1.27)	3.30 (1.30)

Previous analyses determined that no significant gender, withdrawal type, or interaction effects were present for any of the three adjectives. Across all vignette types, withdrawn children were given highest ratings for self-controlled and lowest ratings for assertive. These (non-significant) patterns can be seen in figure 4.0. Shy female children received the highest rating for both self-controlled (M=4.52, SD=1.16) and cooperative (M=3.56, SD=1.47), but the lowest rating for assertive (M=2.62, SD=.98). Male shy children received the lowest ratings for self-controlled (M=3.48, SD=1.16) and cooperative (M=2.91, SD=1.27). Female unsociable children received the highest rating of the four vignette groups for assertive, though it was still a low mean (M=2.62, SD=.98).

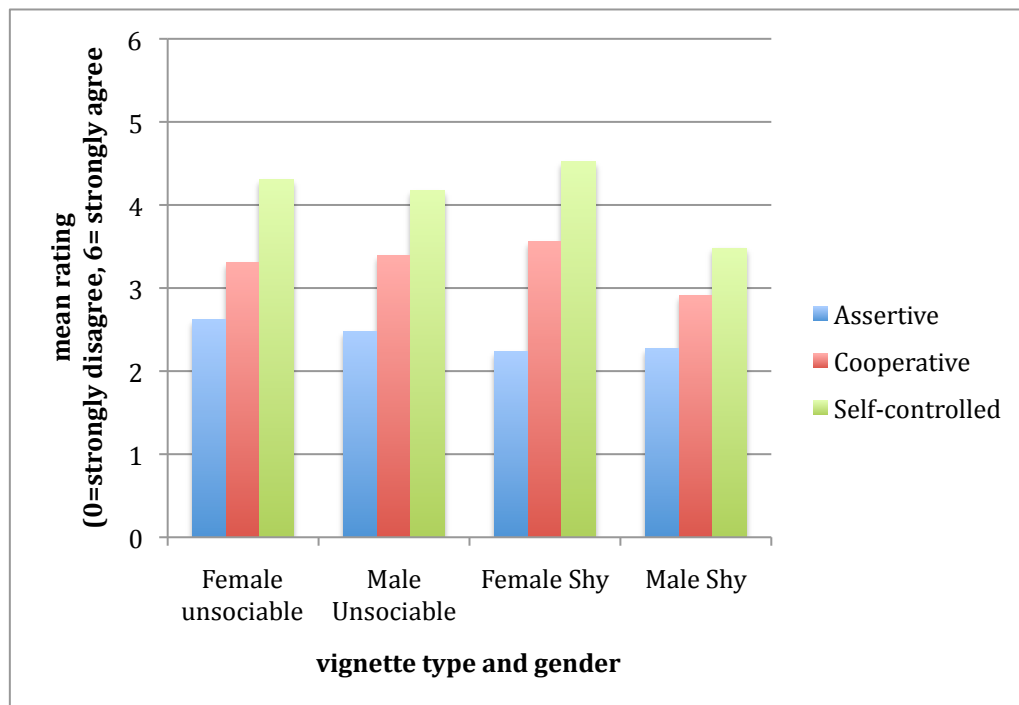


Figure 4.0: Mean responses to elements of social competence across vignette withdrawal type and vignette gender

Resilience

Mean ratings for the adjective ‘resilience’ across vignette withdrawal type and gender are listed in table 4.3. Unsociable males received the highest mean rating, followed by unsociable females, shy females and shy males. Of all 18 adjectives, ‘resilient’ had the greatest range of mean ratings across vignette withdrawal type.

Table 4.3: Mean scores (standard deviations) for ‘resilience’ across vignette gender and withdrawal type.

	Female Unsociable	Male Unsociable	Female Shy	Male Shy	TOTAL	
Resilient	3.81 (1.17)	4.26 (1.05)	3.12 (1.59)	2.73 (.94)	3.49 (1.34)	*1, (*3)

Previous analyses determined a significant univariate vignette type effect, with unsociable children rated more highly than shy children ($F(3,92) = 19.7$, $p < .001$), as well as an interaction effect of vignette withdrawal type and vignette gender that approached significance ($F(3,92) = 2.8$, $p = .094$), with the male unsociable type with the highest rating, and the male shy type the lowest rating.

Research Question 2

What are teacher beliefs in regards to the attributions of the behaviour and the negative consequences of the behaviour?

The mean scores (and standard deviations) associated with the analyses with all responses to statements about the children are shown in table 4.4. The responses are listed in order of increasing agreement as judged by the total mean score for each adjective.

Table 4.4: Mean Scores (Standard Deviations) for attribution and negative cost statements as a function of their type of withdrawal and gender.

	Unsociable		Shy		Total	Sig*
	Female	Male	Female	Male		
This behaviour is unlikely to change	2.96 (1.15)	2.73 (1.08)	2.62 (1.36)	2.73 (.94)	2.76 (1.14)	
This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child's academic development	2.96 (1.00)	2.91 (1.15)	3.84 (1.32)	3.59 (1.50)	3.33 (1.30)	*1
This child might act this way on purpose	3.65 (1.09)	3.82 (1.18)	3.42 (1.60)	3.18 (1.22)	3.52 (1.30)	
This child may be going through a stage or phase that will end	3.73 (1.00)	3.64 (.95)	4.04 (1.22)	3.59 (1.30)	3.76 (1.12)	
This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child's social development	3.81 (.98)	3.36 (1.14)	4.62 (.90)	4.95 (.72)	4.19 (1.12)	*1 *3
This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way	4.46 (.71)	4.50 (.58)	4.23 (.82)	4.45 (.74)	4.41 (.72)	

*Significance: 1 = Type of Withdrawal, 2 = Gender, 3 = Type x Gender

Negative costs to the child.

As noted in the Method, two of the six survey questions asked teachers to rate their degree of agreement that there were negative social and academic costs associated with the behaviour of the child in the vignette ('This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with the child's social [and 'academic'] development'). To investigate teacher perceptions of the negative academic and social costs to the

child, scores on these two items were examined in a 2 (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA).

Prior to conducting the MANOVA, a Pearson correlation was performed between dependent variables in order to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be correlated with each other in the moderate range (i.e., .20 - .60; Meyers, Gampst, & Guarino, 2006). There was a correlation of .50 between the two dependent variables, suggesting the appropriateness of a MANOVA. Using an alpha level of .001 to evaluate homogeneity assumptions, Box's M test of homogeneity of covariance was not significant ($p > .05$), therefore the assumption of homogeneity of covariances was not violated. Levene's homogeneity of variance test was not significant for either dependent variable.

A significant MANOVA effect was found for withdrawal-type (Wilks' $\Lambda = .705$, $F=19$, $p < .001$) but not for gender (Wilks' $\Lambda = .996$, $F= .197$, $p=.836$), while the interaction effect for these two variables approached significance (Wilks' $\Lambda = .938$, $F=3.028$, $p=.053$).

Following the significant MANOVA, a separate 2 (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) analysis of variance was undertaken for scores for both negative social cost, and negative academic cost. A significant univariate main effect of vignette type was observed for both social ($F=38.341$, $p < .001$) and academic costs ($F= 9.374$, $p < .01$). There was also a significant effect observed for the interaction of vignette gender and type when taking into account social costs only ($F=4.089$, $p<.05$).

Teachers perceived more negative cost (both academic and social) for the shy type of child. For academic cost there was greater perceived cost for shy children ($M=3.73$, $SD= 1.40$) than for unsociable children ($M=2.94$, $SD= 1.06$). Similarly, for social cost there was greater perceived cost for shy children ($M=4.77$, $SD= .83$) than for unsociable children ($M=3.60$, $SD= 1.07$). There was most perceived negative social cost for shy males ($M= 4.19$, $SD= 1.12$) but least social cost for unsociable males ($M= 3.36$, $SD= 1.14$).

The attribution of the behaviour

The remaining four statements were considered in terms of the attribution of the behaviour, and whether teachers considered the behaviour stable or a stage,

intentional or unintentional, or part of the child's disposition or situation-dependent. Overall, these four questions about the attribution of the socially withdrawn behaviour yielded no insight into how teachers viewed the behaviour.

To investigate teacher perceptions of the stability of the behaviour, scores on these two items ('This behaviour is unlikely to change', and 'This child may be going through a stage or phase that will end') were examined in a 2 (Withdrawal Type) a 2 (Gender) multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). Responses for 'This behaviour is unlikely to change' were reversed before analysis. Prior to conducting the MANOVA, a Pearson correlation was performed between dependent variables in order to test the MANOVA assumption that the dependent variables would be correlated with each other in the moderate range (i.e., .20 - .60; Meyers, Gampst, & Guarino, 2006). There was a correlation of .20 between the two dependent variables, suggesting the appropriateness of a MANOVA. Using an alpha level of .001 to evaluate homogeneity assumptions, Box's M test of homogeneity of covariance was not significant ($p > .05$), therefore the assumption of homogeneity of covariances was not violated. Levene's homogeneity of variance test was not significant for either dependent variable. No significant effects were found for withdrawal-type (Wilks' $\Lambda = .983$, $F = .808$, $p = .45$), gender (Wilks' $\Lambda = .992$, $F = .369$, $p = .699$), or their interaction (Wilks' $\Lambda = .990$, $F = .465$, $p = .630$).

There was a single statement relating to the controllability of the behaviour ('This child might act this way on purpose'). To investigate teacher perceptions of the controllability of the behaviour, a one-way ANOVA was performed, with vignette type (shy or unsociable) and gender (male child and female child) as independent variables and the statement the dependent variable. There were no significant results for vignette withdrawal type, vignette gender, or their interaction. There was also one statement relating to whether the behaviour is part of the child's disposition ('This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way'). To investigate teacher perceptions about whether the behaviour was part of the child's disposition, a one-way ANOVA was performed with vignette type (shy or unsociable) and gender (male child and female child) as independent variables and the statement as the dependent variable. There were no significant results for vignette withdrawal type, vignette gender, or their interaction.

Open-ended question responses

Despite no statistically significant findings relating to teacher perceptions of the attribution of the behaviour, open-ended question responses contributed some understanding of how teachers attributed the behaviour. For the question, 'what would you need to consider when working with this child, if anything?', 85 teachers answered. Recurring themes in the answers were identified, and the number of instances they occurred tallied, table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Percentage of teacher answers mentioning common themes in response to the question: "What would you need to consider when working with this child, if anything?"

Allow time/ allow child to be his / her self	6%
Relationship with teacher/ teacher strategies	9%
Underlying problems/ learning difficulties	20%
Strategies for helping the child	22%
Interests/ engagement / learning preference	24%
Peer relationships/ classroom dynamics	26%
Personal characteristics and skills of child	36%
Family background / culture/ history	68%

Because there appeared to be differences in the frequencies of responses depending on the vignette withdrawal type and vignette gender, responses were further categorised according whether suggestions indicated that the problem or solution appeared to be situated within the child's family / background, within the child themselves, or within the environment, and are displayed in figure 4.1 below. Many teachers gave more than one response, sometimes across these three categories. The pattern was different for unsociable females and shy males than it was for unsociable males or shy females. Unsociable males and shy females received a greater number of considerations, with these fairly evenly split between each category. By contrast, unsociable females and shy males received fewer considerations, with less of these regarding the child's background, or whether the problem was located within the child.

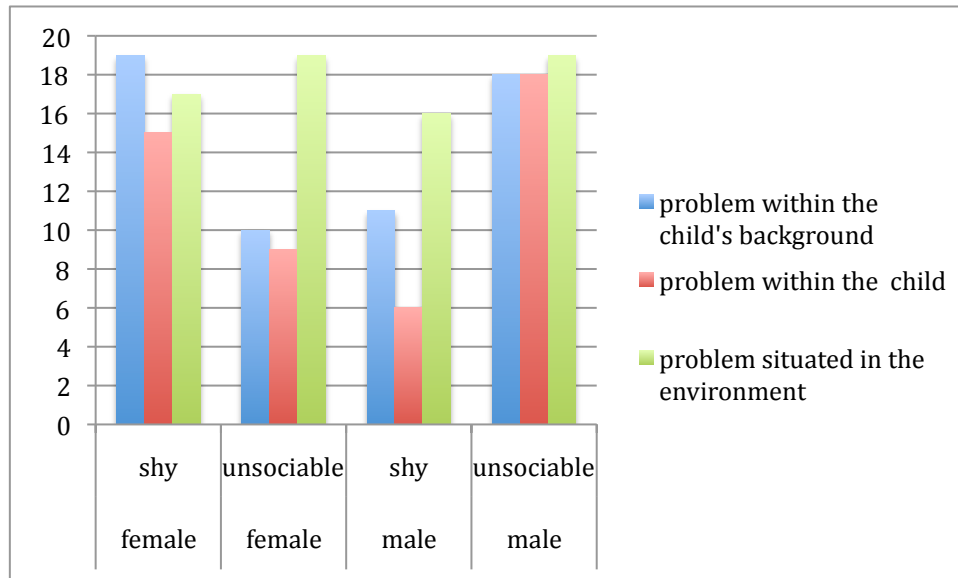


Figure 4.1: Frequency of responses indicating the location of the behaviour across vignette withdrawal type and gender

It is clear that some teachers thought that the description of behaviour gave reason to investigate more fully for a possible diagnosis or undetected factor. The possibility that the child might be on the autistic spectrum was raised by seven respondents. The possibility that the child could be gifted was considered by five respondents. Thirteen respondents suggested checking for an undiagnosed hearing, speech or vision issue. Some comments provided further examples of the possible cause of the behaviour (with the vignette type in brackets):

“I have a student who fits the story above. He was transferred from another school. He is a shy boy who had undiagnosed vision issues. Now he has glasses and he is gaining academic and social confidence.” (male, unsociable)

“Have taught 2 aspergers boys that demonstrated similar traits.” (male, unsociable)

“Yes I have taught children like this but perhaps not with the social anxiety. One was on the autism spectrum, another very academically talented, the one that did have social anxiety it stemmed from family circumstances.” (female, shy)

“In my experience the children who are choosing not to participate are the ones who have things happening externally - family problems, on-going stress or anxiety” (female, shy)

Research Question 3

- **What areas of additional support or pedagogical practice do teachers identify as being appropriate for modifying the behaviour of socially withdrawn children?**

Open-ended question responses

Respondents were asked 'What additional support or resources would you try to access for this child, if any? The number of responses to the question that included at least one idea was 72. No distinction was made between non-responses or responses in which the teacher indicated they would access no additional support. Recurring themes in the answers were identified, and the number of instances they occurred tallied and represented in table 4.6. The most frequent response was to access a RTLB (Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour), mentioned by 36% of teachers. Also frequently mentioned were consulting with parents (26%) and consulting with colleagues (18%).

Table 4.6: Percentage of teachers mentioning types of support or resources for a socially withdrawn child (across vignette gender and vignette withdrawal type).

Encourage sport/ outside activities	4%
GATE / gifted screening	4%
Speech therapy/ oral language skills	6%
Consult principal/ senior	7%
Teacher -aide/ in-school learning support	11%
Monitor/ assess further	11%
External agency inc. health nurse, social worker	11%
Access social skills help	13%
Consult with colleagues	18%
Consult parents	26%
RTLB	36%

These responses were further summarised (figure 4.2) so that the types of support that may be accessed could be compared against vignette gender and vignette type. All types of support were mentioned more often for shy children than unsociable children. The greatest difference when gender was taken into account, was that external support was mentioned more often (female, 29; male 9) for female children.

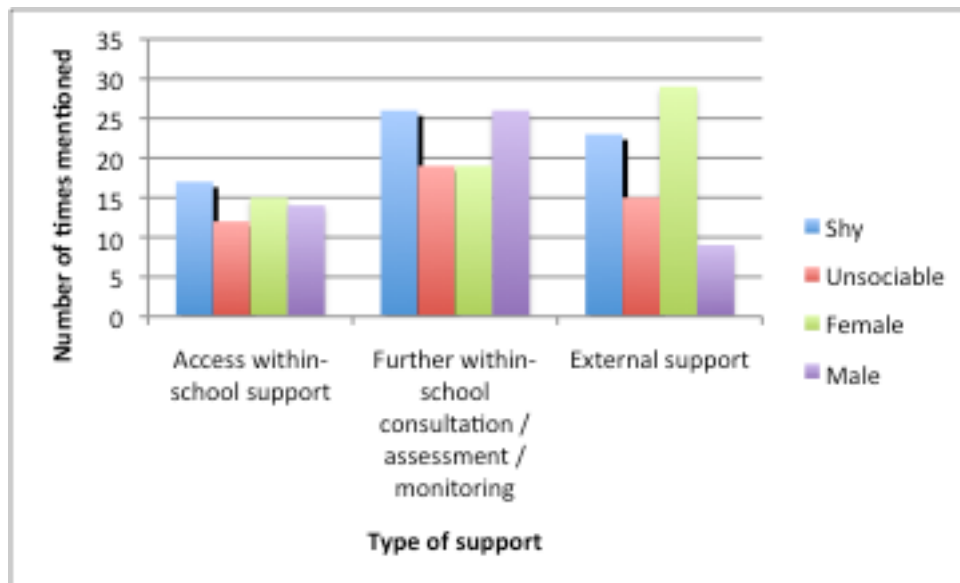


Figure 4.2: Number of teachers mentioning specific types of support or resources for a socially withdrawn child by vignette gender and vignette withdrawal type.

In both this question, and in a final open-ended question asking “Do you have additional comments that relate to your answers, or on your experiences teaching a child like the one described”, a few additional themes emerged. Across all open-ended questions, six teachers emphasised the importance of involving the child in discussions about their behaviour, or when making decisions about how to modify it. Ten teachers also emphasised the importance of the teacher/ child relationship when looking at the cause for the withdrawal, as well as possible ways of modifying it. Teacher comments for commonly mentioned themes arising from these two questions are included below.

Support must be adapted to the individual

Some teachers stated that they did not have enough information to make a sound judgement, and would adapt any strategies to suit the individual.

"What works for one child doesn't always work for others. Constantly need to look at children as individuals and see what works." (female, shy)

"I found it hard to rate the likelihood of the characteristics as I would need to develop a relationship with the child before making a judgement." (male, unsociable)

Named strategies or resources can be useful

Particular named strategies or resources across questions were:

- social stories
- buddy systems
- books about resilience
- appropriate picture books
- 'Habits of mind'
- 'Walk tall'
- 'Talk to Learn'
- 'Circle Time'
- barrier games
- 'Play is the way'
- think-pair share activities
- 'Incredible Years' strategies
- 'Socially Speaking' programme
- role-modelling social situations
- 'Talking Sticks'
- class sociograms

The quality of the teacher/ child relationship is important

Some teachers prioritised looking at their own practice and the quality of the relationship with the student.

"Making sure you have a strong bond with the child would be important too."
(male, shy)

"A strong personal relationship works wonders!" (male, shy)

"I always first look at myself - what have/haven't I done to create a safe classroom culture. If the child was happy, and capable of joining in when they needed, or

wanted to, then I wouldn't have a problem with her not always joining in. It's the idea that she's displaying anxiety which makes me think she wishes to join in, but either doesn't have the confidence or social skills necessary to join in. Building up a relationship of trust with these kinds of children is really important, as it's only when they feel safe that they're going to be willing to step outside of their comfort zone, thus allowing change for the better.” (female, shy)

“I taught a child just like this. He would get very anxious and upset about things (like physical games or things being too noisy or too many people being involved) but he couldn't tell me what was bothering him. He liked rocks. So every time he talked to me about something he was feeling we would put a rock in a big jar. When he got 20 rocks in the jar we wrote a letter home to parents (who already knew about this). This little boy was pretty happy with himself. And he was talking to me far more halfway through the year than he had at the beginning.” (male, shy)

“I have a boy like this in my class. It has taken a full term for him to start to interact with others. He likes to do the right thing and unless he is sure what he is going to do is perfect he stands back and observes. I know he is learning when he is sitting back although he will not always participate. When he feels ready he is now taking part and letting him work at his own pace including lots of hug rewards (his choice) is working well. His home environment is difficult, single parent, 5 children under 6. Patience has reaped rewards and understanding his needs has been key. He is not meaning to be difficult, he needs to be listened to.” (male, shy)

These children can succeed

Some teachers shared their own experiences of teaching a child such as the one described, or even from personal experience as growing up as such a child. The teachers that chose to share these anecdotes were positive about the potential for these children to be successful.

“One child particularly comes to mind. She developed into a very successful high school student, was a head girl and won an overseas scholarship. This probably

has influenced my opinions as taken on her time in our school and my class, this did not appear to be a foreseeable outcome for her.” (female, unsociable)

“I was a child like this one. I had a different primary school every year of my life and it had a huge impact - it didn't mean I was thick - I just fell behind and learnt to avoid making friendships because I changed schools so often. Home life also not brilliant so her behaviour could well be a way of protecting herself and surviving. She could well change with the right support/encouragement and someone noticing her.” (female, unsociable)

“I have taught many children like this and have found that these children generally find their feet at some stage, but also need gentle encouragement and understanding.” (female, shy)

Accept the child for who they are

A small number of teachers felt it important to be accepting of these children for who they are, and accepting them as complete, without feeling that it is necessary to change them.

“Some children are quiet and no matter how much you try to get them to interact they just choose not to. I have taught a child like this who was extremely quiet but was happy and enjoyed school.” (female, unsociable)

“Lots of children are like this, and it's OK if they're OK with it.” (female, shy)

“Haven't we learnt yet that not all children learn the same. Boys learn differently than girls. Do we all have to be social people? Can't people be different? He may be just an observer of life?” (male, unsociable)

“Having taught children like this I have found generally that they are perfectly happy children who develop close friendships with one or two others and this is part of their personality trait. Often, I have found them to be quite confident within themselves, although some are shy children.” (female, unsociable)

Supporting Peer Relationships

Teachers were also asked how they would try to develop the peer relationships of the child described in the vignette. The number of responses to the question that included at least one idea was 80, with any non-responses ignored from analysis. Recurring themes in the answers were identified, and the number of instances they occurred, tallied and represented in table 4.7. The most frequent responses involved managing pair or buddy work (50%) followed by managing group work, or the roles within groups (34%). Many teachers suggested more than one strategy.

Table 4.7: Frequency of responses for open-ended question: What strategies would you consider using to develop this child's peer relationships, if any?

Encourage friendships outside classroom	3%
Use positive reinforcement / praise for wanted behaviour	6%
Allow working alone	8%
Encourage leadership role	8%
Work on child/ teacher relationship	14%
Direct teaching of skills inc. role play	14%
Use child's interests	16%
Manage classroom dynamics/ emotional safety	18%
Social skills teaching	19%
Manage group work and roles within groups	34%
Manage buddy/ pair work	50%

These responses were examined to see if any differences in response rate were noted by vignette gender or type. Teacher responses to this question overall did not appear to differ greatly based on the gender of the child. The greatest observed differences in responses was that social skills teaching (female, 10; male, 5) and working on the teacher-child relationship (female, 7; male, 3) were more frequently mentioned for female children. More often mentioned for boys were allowing the child to work alone (male, 4; female; 2), and encouraging a leadership role (male, 4; female, 2). Teacher responses to this question overall did not appear

the 'female shy' or 'male unsociable' categories was recorded as a positive, and adjectives rated the highest for 'female unsociable' or 'male shy' categories, negative. A second test was for the lowest means, in which the lowest in either the 'female unsociable' or 'male shy' categories was recorded as a positive, and adjectives rated the lowest for 'female shy' or 'male unsociable' categories were recorded as negative. For both tests the 18 results were submitted to a binomial sign test. The rate of highest means in 'female shy' or 'male unsociable' categories was significant ($S=4, p \leq .05$, two-tailed), and the rate of lowest means in 'female unsociable' or 'male shy' categories was significant ($S=4, p < .05$, two-tailed). For both the set of highest means and lowest means the null hypothesis was rejected, that is, it is unlikely that this pattern of score was achieved coincidentally.

A similar pattern emerged when the variables of most interest to the current research were compared. Patterns of greatest and lowest mean scores across intelligence, resilience and social competence are summarised below and compared to the greatest and lowest perceived academic and social costs, table 4.8.

Table 4.8: Highest and lowest means across vignette withdrawal type and gender

	Female Shy	Female Unsociable	Male Shy	Male Unsociable
Resilient			Least	Most
Socially Competent	Most		Least	
assertive	Least	Most		
cooperative	Most		Least	
self-controlled	Most		Least	
Intelligent	Most	Least		
Academic/ career success	Most	Least		
wise	Most	Least		
practical	Most	Least		
creative			Least	Most
analytical		Least	Most	
Negative cost				
social			Greatest cost	Least cost
academic	Greatest cost			Least cost

Female shy children were rated highest in most aspects of social competence and intelligence, but their withdrawal was seen as having the greatest academic cost. Female unsociable children were rated highest in assertiveness but lowest across most aspects of intelligence. Male shy children were rated least resilient and socially competent, and this was seen as having the greatest social

cost. Male unsociable children were rated most resilient and most creative, and this pattern was perceived as having the least academic or social cost across four vignette types. These patterns of teacher perceptions may be an interesting area for further exploration.

CHAPTER V DISCUSSION

This chapter consists of a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, limitations and recommendations for further research, and conclusions.

Summary of the Study

The purpose of this study was to better understand differences in teacher perceptions of two subtypes of socially withdrawn children; shy children who withdraw socially out of fear of social interaction, and those children who also withdraw socially, but seemingly without associated social anxiety. The way in which teachers respond to socially withdrawn children, especially in their early schooling, appears to have a potentially important effect on later social and emotional adjustment. This research aimed to build on earlier research by contributing to an understanding of differences in teacher perceptions between the two subtypes of socially withdrawn children in primary schools. It is also the first time that this type of research has been carried out with New Zealand teachers.

Teachers were randomly allocated one of four vignettes describing the social behaviour of a hypothetical male unsociable, male shy, female unsociable or female shy child in a classroom situation. Participants were asked to respond to what extent they agreed with six statements about the vignette child. This determined how teachers viewed the behaviour in terms of its negative social and academic cost, stability (stable or a stage), controllability (intentional or unintentional), and disposition (part of the child's disposition or situation-dependent). Teachers were also asked to rate how likely they thought 18 adjectives would apply to the child described. The 18 adjectives were analysed to identify patterns based on the withdrawal type and gender of the child. Included in this list were adjectives relating to social competence, intelligence and resilience, and these were analysed separately.

Open-ended questions were used to determine what additional support or resources teachers would use, what they would need to consider (allowing responses about pedagogical practice as well as the cause of the behaviour), and

what strategies they would use to develop the child's peer relationships. These were coded post-hoc according to commonly occurring themes emerging from the comments. The number of times certain responses were given were tallied under headings, and by the gender and withdrawal type of the child they responded to in the vignette. Participants also shared a variety of anecdotal comments in relation to their own practice and in describing children they have taught, and these were also used to illustrate their stated beliefs about pedagogical practice.

This study included 97 participants, all New Zealand contributing primary school teachers, who responded to a request, sent by letter and then e-mail to the principals of their schools, to participate in an online survey investigating 'peer relationships'. A demographic breakdown of respondents was provided for gender, age and number of years teaching experience. This study included three research questions:

1. What characteristics do teachers attribute to children as a function of the child's type of withdrawal and their gender?
2. What are teacher beliefs in regards to the attributions of the behaviour and the negative consequences of the behaviour?
3. What areas of pedagogical practice do teachers identify as being appropriate for modifying the behaviour of both types of socially withdrawn children?

For question one, a MANOVA was used across all adjectives to analyse participant responses and determine whether there were significant differences in mean responses according to vignette gender, vignette withdrawal type, or an interaction of the two. Three characteristics, or clusters of characteristics were examined in greater depth. For "intelligence", patterns of responses to the adjective 'intelligent' were used, as were responses to the 5 adjectives 'intelligent', 'creative', 'wise', 'practical' and 'analytical', combined into a scale to test whether this type of measure of intelligence, as proposed by Sternberg (Sternberg, 2010) would yield different results across vignette withdrawal type and gender. A (Withdrawal Type) x 2 (Gender) analysis of variance was used with the mean total scores from this scale. To look at 'social competence', patterns across vignette withdrawal type and gender were looked at across three key social competencies;

'cooperation', 'assertion', and 'self-control'. Patterns of 'resilience' were looked at across vignette withdrawal type and gender.

For question two, two separate MANOVAs were used across the two statements relating to negative cost, and to the four statements relating to attributions of the behaviour, to analyse participant responses and determine whether there were significant differences in mean responses according to vignette gender, vignette withdrawal type, or an interaction of the two. Recurring themes in the answers of open-ended questions were identified, and the number of instances they occurred tallied according to whether the problem or solution appeared to be situated within the child's family / background, within the child themselves, or within the environment, and by vignette withdrawal type and gender. A selection of teacher comments that illustrated teacher perceptions about the possible cause of the behaviour was included.

Question three was answered by using responses to three open-ended questions; 'What additional support or resources would you try to access for this child, if any?', 'What strategies would you consider using to develop this child's peer relationships, if any?' and 'Do you have additional comments that relate to your answers, or on your experiences teaching a child like the one described?'. Responses for the first question were collated under identified themes emerging from the responses and were summarised according to vignette withdrawal type and gender. Teacher comments were drawn from both questions to further elaborate on some of these themes. Responses to the question about peer relationships were collated under emerging themes and used to determine how often particular strategies were mentioned.

Discussion of the findings

1. What characteristics do teachers attribute to children as a function of the child's type of withdrawal and their gender?

Overall, teachers rated withdrawn children most highly on the characteristics of intelligent, self-controlled and capable, and least highly on the characteristics of assertive, followed by self-confident and cooperative.

This study found that teachers do differentiate between shy and unsociable children. On the whole, unsociable children were viewed more favourably than shy

children. Teachers perceived unsociable children as more self-confident and more resilient, with a non-significant tendency for more happy also observed. However, unsociable children were perceived as less intelligent than shy children. Teachers did not distinguish between withdrawn children on the basis of gender.

There was one significant interaction effect for the adjective 'empathetic', for which shy females were rated the most empathetic, but shy males the least empathetic. Interaction effects for 'resilient', 'wise', 'practical', and 'capable' also approached significance. All results, both significant and non-significant were observed to follow a pattern of highest mean scores spread between mostly shy females and unsociable males, with lowest mean scores spread between mostly unsociable females and shy males.

These results follow similar patterns observed in comparable research. For example, Arbeau and Coplan (2007) found that at kindergarten level, teachers do distinguish between shy and unsociable children. Overall, kindergarten teachers viewed unsociability as less of a problem than shyness, though some gender differences emerged, with unsociability better tolerated in boys than girls.

This lesser concern about shy girls also follows what appears to be a pattern of greater social acceptance of shyness for girls than for boys in Western culture. Parents and peers have been found to respond more negatively to shyness in boys than girls (Coplan et al., 2004; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003). Some researchers have strongly made this point with regards to teachers also (Coplan et al., 2008; Gazelle & Ladd, 2003), although though in other studies this gender difference has not been found significant (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Bosacki, et al., 2011).

Across all adjectives, withdrawn children were rated most highly for 'intelligent', though this did differ depending on the vignette type and gender. That teachers rated withdrawn children higher for the characteristic of 'intelligent' than for any other characteristic was somewhat surprising, given that this seems to conflict with many findings suggesting that teachers rate shy children as less intelligent than their non-shy peers. Researchers have consistently shown that teachers perceive shy children as less intelligent than their peers (Bell, 1995; Coplan, et al., 2011). In a comparison of shy, average and exuberant children, teachers reported that the average/typical child had the highest academic abilities, followed by the exuberant/talkative child, and then the shy/quiet child (Coplan et

al., 2011). In this study, shy females were rated highest for this characteristic, while unsociable females were rated lowest. Using a scale that comprised of the characteristics: intelligent, creative, analytical, wise, and practical (Sternberg, 2003, 2010), results were the same. Shy females were rated highest, and unsociable females rated lowest. Patterns of positivity were the same for all of these 5 adjectives, except for 'analytical', for which both shy and unsociable males received (non-significantly) higher ratings than both types of female.

Results from this study cannot be directly compared with other studies, as both shy and unsociable children were considered, unlike other studies. Additionally, previous studies have also contrasted 'shy' with alternative constructs such as 'average', 'pro-social' or 'exuberant', unlike the current study. It should be noted that mean responses for the adjective 'intelligent' all fell within the 'mildly agree' to 'agree' range (with the exception of unsociable females, who were slightly below this), which certainly does not indicate that teachers rate withdrawn children as especially intelligent.

It is difficult to separate the idea of actual 'intelligence' from teacher ratings of 'intelligence'. (Hughes & Coplan, 2010) found that shyness was negatively related to academic achievement, especially when teacher ratings were used, and concluded that teacher bias, likely as a result of perceived academic engagement, contributed to these lower teacher ratings. Coplan et al. (2011) found that teachers rated shy/quiet children as having poorer verbal skills, and predicted they would perform worse academically in their class, compared with exuberant and average children. This is not just a matter of perception. Shy children have been found to score lower on standardised tests of language abilities (Evans, 2010), important because teachers may predict students' academic abilities on the basis of their verbal and social behaviours (Bell, 1995). Potential biases in teacher perceptions of children's characteristics are important to recognise, as these may, in turn, influence children's self-perceptions and outcomes, as part of a self-fulfilling prophecy. A teacher with high expectations for all students is likely to provide a classroom environment that enables them to succeed.

One of the most interesting findings was that teachers rated shy female children as more intelligent than the other 3 types of children, but that they were also most concerned about the academic outcomes for shy female children. This

seems to indicate that they see the academic potential of these children, but understand that an additional characteristic of these children may prevent them from reaching their potential. It may also reflect a pattern of greater understanding of, or identification between teachers (mostly female) and female children. It can be assumed that these (mostly female) teachers would be more likely to identify shy rather than unsociable characteristics in themselves, given the high level of social motivation required to be an effective teacher.

Those socially withdrawn children who are able to behave in a socially competent manner may be partly protected from negative outcomes. Miller and Cole (2007) go so far as to suggest that socially competent shy children may be protected from peer rejection. Even if socially competent in some areas, socially withdrawn children do appear to uniformly display a deficit in the ability to assert their needs, one important aspect of social competence. No matter whether shy or unsociable, male or female, socially withdrawn children were given highest ratings for self-controlled, followed by cooperative, and lowest ratings for assertive.

Other studies have found that shy children were likely to be rated as most socially competent by teachers in the areas of cooperation and self-control (Rudasill & Konold, 2008). Both of these aspects of social competence assist a child to meet academic and behavioural expectations in the classroom as they mean a child can comply with teacher directions and show restraint, allowing a flow of classroom activities. Rudasill and Konold also found that shy children are less likely to initiate contact with their teacher. While their study did not specifically label this behaviour as 'assertion', there is clearly overlap in what may constitute 'assertion' and the ability to initiate interactions. Rudasill and Konold state that this lack of initiation of interactions is the reason the shy children in their study developed less conflicted, but also less close relationships with their teachers.

While gender effects were not found to be significant in either Rudasill and Konold's work, or the current study, results suggest that gender effects deserve greater exploration, especially as results for social competence continued a pattern of less concern for female, shy children, and most concern for shy, male children. Shy female children in the study received the highest rating for both self-controlled and cooperative, but the lowest rating for assertive. Of the four types, male shy children received the lowest ratings for self-controlled and cooperative and had

the highest rated social cost. While these results were non-significant, this may offer some clue as to teacher's concern for shy males, given the importance of these characteristics in classroom interactions.

Results from this study indicate that the impact of resilience on early withdrawn behaviours is worthy of further understanding. Degnan and Fox (2007) proposed that the discontinuity of socially withdrawn behaviours into middle childhood and adolescence, through the development of adaptive attention and regulatory skills, may function as examples of the resilience process. Resilience was the adjective that produced the greatest range of responses from teachers. Unsociable children were rated as more resilient than shy children. Male unsociable children were rated especially highly on this item, with shy males rated the lowest (a difference approaching significance).

2. What are teacher beliefs in regards to the attributions of the behaviour and the negative consequences of the behaviour?

Teachers were not overly concerned about the academic cost for withdrawn children, though perceived that there was more cost for shy children. Mean responses indicated that they were generally more concerned about the potential social cost for withdrawn children, and especially for shy children. The gender of the child did not seem to matter for either academic or social cost. One interaction effect showed that there was most perceived negative social cost for shy males but least social cost for unsociable males. These findings parallel Arbeau's and Coplan's findings; that shy behaviours were perceived as having a greater academic and social cost than unsociable behaviours (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007).

As to whether teachers considered the behaviour stable or a stage, intentional or unintentional, or part of the child's disposition or situation-dependent; no differences in patterns of responses were noted dependent on the withdrawal type or gender of the vignette child. The greatest agreement with any of the attribution statements was with "This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way", indicating that teachers agree that withdrawn behaviour is part of the child's disposition. Teachers, on average, mildly disagreed with the statement 'this behaviour is unlikely to change', indicating that they thought the withdrawn behaviour could be a stage. For the statement 'This child may be going through a

stage or phase that will end', teachers' responses indicated that they were unsure about the stability of the behaviour. Teachers were slightly more inclined to think (non-significantly) that the child might 'act this way on purpose' for the unsociable type children, indicating that unsociable children had more control over their behaviour.

Similarly, Arbeau and Coplan found that the shy children's behaviours were viewed as being less controllable than those of unsociable children, and this (non-significant) trend was also noted in their results. They proposed that this is due to teachers' implicit understanding that difficulties regulating social fears and anxiety are at the core of shy behaviour (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007).

Teacher responses from open-ended questions offered more insight into their attributions for the behaviour. They considered both that the behaviour might stem from a problem in the child's background or family interactions, or that it could be inherent within the child. Some respondents suggested checking for speech, hearing or vision issues, or searching for an autistic spectrum disorder or giftedness. Given the brevity of the vignette descriptions, it is not surprising that teachers considered a wide range of reasons for the behaviour, other than shyness or unsociability. In their interviews with teachers, Bosacki, Coplan, Rose-Krasnor, Hughes (2011) found that teachers also identified a range of both personality and environmental factors that may influence the development of shyness. This pattern, identified in both this study, and Bosacki et al's, reflects what we know about shyness; that it has a partial biological basis and is quite stable across time (Kagan, et al., 1987). Environmental influences also play a critical role in the life outcomes of shy children (Gazelle & Ladd, 2003; Ladd & Burgess, 1999) and the teachers in this study considered a range of environmental factors across shy and unsociable type children.

3. What areas of pedagogical practice do teachers identify as being appropriate for modifying the behaviour of both types of socially withdrawn children?

The most frequently mentioned type of assistance teachers stated they may access for the child in the vignette was a Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) (36%). This was more frequently mentioned for both shy and

female children. Consulting with either colleagues (18%) or parents (26%) was also frequently mentioned. When teachers were asked to focus on how they would support peer relationships, the most frequent type of response involved managing buddy or work in pairs (50%), or managing group-work and the roles within groups (34%).

Some teachers focused on the teaching or reinforcement of specific behaviours through social skills teaching (19%), the direct teaching of desired skills (14%), and using praise or positive reinforcement for desired behaviour (6%). These percentages seem low, given the potential benefit of teaching socially withdrawn children more effective ways of interacting with peers.

Quantitatively examining teacher self-reporting of pedagogical practice was outside the scope of this study, though other researchers have looked at this. Arbeau et al. (2007) found teachers more likely to intervene with unsociable boys than girls, typically by reporting their behaviour and actively teaching social skills. Teachers also reported they were more likely to directly intervene or teach social skills to shy children than to unsociable children. The breakdown of types of support by vignette type and gender indicates that a similar pattern could be present amongst New Zealand teachers. There were some suggestions that appeared to differ depending on the gender of the child. One possible difference in this study is that social skills teaching, and working on the teacher-child relationship, were mentioned more frequently for girls than boys. Without quantitatively exploring this further, it would not be possible to establish whether this represented a real difference in approach.

Recent research has emphasised that positive teacher-child relationships may play an important protective role in the socio-emotional adjustment of shy children (Arbeau et al., 2010). Some teachers in this study either instinctively or knowledgeably considered the impact of their own approach, or the way the classroom environment may or not reflect the interests of the child by suggesting using the child's interests (16%) or working on the teacher/ child relationship (14%).

Teachers named a wide range of resources and strategies they would consider using. Some of these were manualised programmes, such as 'Socially Speaking' and 'Incredible Years', while others were ideas about activities, such as

using appropriate picture books and using class sociograms. The variety of suggestions was notable. It was not clear from responses whether teachers would have a favoured strategy to use with all shy or unsociable children, or whether they would carefully use strategies to suit an individual child. A case by case response is probably essential, for example, social skills training has been shown to be less useful with some unsociable children, who have social skills but choose not to use them (Kearney, 2005).

Teachers made a range of comments under two themes that could be seen as conflicting. Some talked about the ability of socially withdrawn children to change and succeed, altering the trajectory they are on. Others put less emphasis on the need for intervention, but stressed the importance of accepting the child for who they are, without a need for change. It seems plausible that these seemingly contradictory ideas could be incorporated within a helpful approach, nevertheless, teachers must be aware that socially withdrawn children can be assisted to develop peer relationships and that their own influence can be important.

Of possible concern, given the potential impact of socially withdrawn behaviour on life outcomes, is that more teachers did not mention accessing easily available support such as Resource Teachers of Learning and Behaviour. It may be that many teachers favour utilising their support for only the externalising behaviours of the children they teach, and whether this is true or not warrants further investigation.

Implications for practice

Unsociability and intervention

The relatively benign nature of social disinterest (or 'unsociability'), when compared to shyness, has often been stated (Rubin & Asendorpf, 1993), however, we increasingly understand that unsociable children are likely to be excluded by peers, exposing them to a range of potentially negative outcomes. Regardless of the motivation for social withdrawal, teachers should develop an awareness of the social needs of all socially withdrawn children, and recognise that the consequences of poor peer relationships for unsociable children may be as severe as for shy children over time.

Teacher-child relationship

The potential influence of the teacher on the outcomes of socially withdrawn children appears to be considerable. Teacher expectations influence classroom interactions, the socioemotional climate of the classroom, and the learning experiences children are offered, and teachers are able to exert considerable influence on the peer relationships of their students. They have an especially important role in encouraging increased involvement with peers for children who find this difficult.

Teachers also need to be aware of the style of their relationship with the individuals they teach. Shyer children may have difficulty forming close relationships with teachers because they are unlikely to initiate interactions with their teachers, even though this appears to be a positive moderator of shy children's school adjustment. Teachers may need to assist shy children to develop the close relationships they need.

Screening and intervention

Researchers increasingly advocate screening all children for internalising disorders and providing early intervention to those who need it (Huberty, 2009). This could involve using teacher behaviour rating scales, self-report measures for older children, and in-service training for the recognition of internalising difficulties, to teachers. Given that early identification of problems gives the greatest chance of intervening successfully, educating parents and teachers about the value of early identification may be necessary. A further goal is encouraging teachers to recognise that involving parents in discussions about developing shared goals and strategies to assist childrens' social development is likely to be more powerful than a teacher attempting to achieve change by themselves.

Limitations and recommendations for future research

Age range of children

A limitation of this study is that it does not address whether shyness or unsociability is viewed the same way in different age groups. Even within the target age range, a wide range of ages was incorporated (from 5 years to 10 years). It may be that there are certain ages when withdrawn behaviour is better

tolerated, for example, at age 5 during the transition to school. Additionally, if teacher expectation effects do have an impact on the development of socially withdrawn children, it might be expected that the impact would increase with the age of the child.

Dividing teacher responses into narrower age ranges could help to develop a better understanding of how teachers view these child characteristics at different ages, for example, comparing a child's first year at school with their last year of primary school. Given that parents have been found to withdraw some of their support for socially withdrawn children throughout childhood (Hastings, et al., 2010), this pattern would be worth exploring in teachers. There may be patterns of increasing negativity or concern throughout the child's schooling in line with those found in parents.

Teacher characteristics

Some researchers have been somewhat surprised at the lack of gender effects for teacher perceptions of shy children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007; Coplan, et al., 2011; Rubin & Coplan, 2004), given that being a boy is perceived as being more problematic in most of the literature. This indicates that the relationship is not so strong as presumed, or that there may be other factors involved. Understanding whether additional teacher characteristics contribute to gender effects would be a worthwhile topic for future research. Characteristics of the teacher, such as their ethnicity and level of shyness, could be further explored, given that shyness and social withdrawal appear to be understood and perceived quite differently in different cultural settings (Evans, 2010), and teachers' own shyness has been found to moderate some aspects of their perceptions of shy and exuberant children (Arbeau & Coplan, 2007).

This study was heavily weighted towards women's views. Preliminary analyses suggested that male teachers might respond differently than their female counterparts, and a larger sample of males would allow this to be explored more fully. Knowing whether male teachers respond differently than female teachers to shy boys, for example, would add to our understanding of how to best assist these children. Given that male teachers are somewhat rare in the primary school setting, and are often valued for their 'maleness', especially for boys without a

father at home, they may also be encouraged to form different styles of relationships with children in their care. These could differ in closeness or dependence, potentially impacting on the outcomes of socially withdrawn children in their care.

In the research field of teacher expectations, placing greater emphasis on the effect of teacher expectations for the class as a whole, rather than examining the characteristics of individuals that affect teacher expectations, has been identified as an area of future direction for research (Rubie-Davies, 2010; Weinstein, 2002). Determining what teacher characteristics predict a classroom environment in which socially withdrawn children can succeed is a worthwhile avenue of research.

Comparing actual practice with reported practice

It cannot be assumed that the same results would be gained in an actual classroom setting. The use of hypothetical situations is an important starting point for this type of research and offers some benefits, such as the ability to more strictly control variables of interest (Nesdale, 2006). However, surveys may lack depth or discourage an honesty of response, and may not capture the range of practice present in classrooms. Ideally, observational studies of teachers' classroom behaviours would be undertaken to supplement survey data. Whether teachers would put in place the supports they talked about in the survey can only be guessed at. Teachers' actual practice may be quite distinct from their stated practice.

The open-ended responses from New Zealand teachers covered such a variety of approaches and ideas that they left the impression that schools have very different ways of understanding what should be done to help children such as the ones described. Many of the teachers surveyed suggested highly appropriate strategies, but a lack of consistency between responses was noted. This may signal a general gap in teacher education or continuing professional development in New Zealand schools around catering for these children.

This research demonstrates that while some teachers report using a range of strategies to increase the social skills of socially withdrawn children, others advocate accepting the child for 'who they are', and question the need to change

their behaviour. These quite distinct approaches indicate that there may be significant variation in approach at either the level of schools, or individual teachers. The key competencies of 'relating to others' and 'participating and contributing' in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) put a certain value on developing social competencies in all children. Nevertheless, schools can interpret and teach these key competencies as they see fit. Better understanding how socially withdrawn children are perceived and assisted with relation to key competencies at the school level would further our understanding of the gap between actual practice and ideal practice with these children.

Additional reasons for socially withdrawn behaviour

Additional reasons for socially withdrawn behaviour, such as autistic spectrum disorders, a response to trauma, or active isolation by peers were not considered within the scope of this study. Future research should ascertain to what extent teachers understand the constructs of 'shyness' and 'unsociability', and distinguish between these and similar behaviours caused by other factors. This may be especially important for 'unsociability', given that teachers in the present study put more emphasis on further investigation of the child for an additional 'reason' for the behaviour (for example, autistic spectrum disorders, hearing issues, giftedness, the cultural background of the child), than on how to work with the child described.

Exploring resilience

The construct of 'resilience' was not fully explored within the scope of this study, but results indicate that it may be worthy of further investigation. As well as being rated most resilient, male unsociable children's behaviour was seen as having the lowest social and academic cost. It may be that unsociable children are seen as having less negative affect than shy children, which could influence overall ratings of resilience. Better understanding the interactions of extraversion/surgency, negative affect, and effortful control (Rothbart, 2004) in both shy and unsociable children, may aid an understanding of how resilience factors change long-term outcomes in socially withdrawn children.

Concluding statement

The teachers who answered this survey demonstrated a wide range of knowledge about ways of assisting socially withdrawn children. However, teachers appeared to have little shared understanding of the type of child this research referred to as 'unsociable'. This is despite every indication being that long-term consequences for unsociable behaviour are as potentially serious as those for shy children.

Socially withdrawn children are at risk socially and academically, and teachers have an important role in addressing the difficulties of such children. Teachers must understand the power they have to both establish appropriate expectations and a classroom climate that do not limit a child's potential, develop a close relationship with the children they teach, and to influence the development of children's critical early peer relationships.

This role can only be effective if teachers understand the nuances of different kinds of social withdrawal and are conscious of their own behaviours in response to those nuances. To identify socially withdrawn children in a haphazard manner and offer vastly different intervention is doing a huge disservice to these children, especially when the potential for positive change, if identified at an early age, has been shown to be large. It is essential that future research continues to expand our understanding of the best ways of supporting these children.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey (printed copy of online version)

Dear Teacher,

My name is Pamela Seccombe and I am conducting a thesis project toward my Masters degree in Educational Psychology at Massey University. I wish to invite you to assist with a research project on how teachers in New Zealand think about peer relationships in the classroom. The project involves a survey in which you first read a brief account of a child's behaviour then rate your agreement with some statements about the child.

The survey takes approximately 10 minutes. No identifying information, such as name or school, will be collected. Responses will be kept confidential, stored securely, and accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor. The thesis will not identify any individual or school. All information will be destroyed at the completion of the project in December 2012, as required by the ethics approval procedure. A full report of the project will be contained in my thesis available through the Massey University library. A summary report will be made available by emailing me at the address below.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or to withdraw at any time. If you decide to participate you have the right to decline to answer any particular question, provide information on the understanding that your name or identifying information will not be used, and be given access to a summary of the research findings on conclusion.

Finally, I am seeking the help of approximately 100 teachers so I hope you will participate. I believe you will find the survey interesting and it may help you reflect on some of the children you teach. If you have any questions about the research study, please contact either:

Researcher:
Pamela Seccombe
pamela.seccombe@gmail.com
(03) 4712214

Supervisor:
Michael Townsend
michael.townsend@massey.ac.nz
(09) 414 0800, ex. 41099

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) names above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 3505249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz.

Please tick this box to indicate: I have read the above information, I voluntarily agree to participate and I am a New Zealand registered and currently practicing teacher

YES, I agree to participate

Imagine a male child in your classroom. He tends not to volunteer to speak in class, and rarely participates or contributes when working in groups with other children. He seems to prefer not

Circle to what extent you agree with the following statements about the child described above.

This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child's social development

strongly	disagree	mildly	mildly	agree	strongly
disagree		disagree	agree		agree

This child might act this way on purpose

strongly	disagree	mildly	mildly	agree	strongly
disagree		disagree	agree		agree

This behaviour is unlikely to change

strongly	disagree	mildly	mildly	agree	strongly
disagree		disagree	agree		agree

This child may act this way because it is in his/ her nature to act this way

strongly	disagree	mildly	mildly	agree	strongly
disagree		disagree	agree		agree

This behaviour is likely to negatively interfere with this child's academic development

strongly	disagree	mildly	mildly	agree	strongly
disagree		disagree	agree		agree

This child may be going through a stage or phase that will end

strongly	disagree	mildly	mildly	agree	strongly
disagree		disagree	agree		agree

What would you need to consider when working with a child like this, if anything?

What strategies would you consider using to develop this child's peer relationships, if any?

What additional support or resources would you try to access for this child, if any?

Please rate how likely you think each of the following characteristics would apply to the child described.

	very unlikely	moderately unlikely	a little unlikely	a little likely	moderately likely	very likely
Autonomous	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Resilient	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
achievement-oriented	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
wise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
creative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
analytical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
cooperative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
capable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
self-confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
hopeful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
empathetic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
persistent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
intelligent	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
practical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
conscientious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
assertive	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
self-controlled	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
happy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What is your gender? Male Female

Which category below includes your age?

<input type="radio"/> -29	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> 50-59	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> 30-39	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="radio"/> 60 or older	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="radio"/> 40-49	<input type="checkbox"/>		

Number of completed years of teaching service: _____

Optional: Do you have additional comments that relate to your answers, or on your experiences teaching a child like the one described?

Thank you so much!

Appendix B: Information letter to principals

Peer relationships research

12/7/2012

Dear Principal

My name is Pamela Seccombe and I am conducting a thesis project toward my Masters degree at Massey University. I wish to invite your school to assist with a research project on how New Zealand teachers think about peer relationships in the classroom. The project involves a survey in which teachers first read a brief account of a child's behaviour, then rate their agreement with some statements about the child. Teachers will also be asked for their own thoughts about the child.

The online survey will take approximately 10 minutes. No identifying information, such as names, schools, email or IP addresses will be collected. All information collected will be kept confidential and will be stored in a password-protected electronic format accessible only to the researcher and her supervisor. The written thesis will not identify any individual or school. All information will be destroyed at the completion of the project in December 2012, as required by the ethics approval procedure. A full report of the project will be contained in my thesis available through the Massey University library. A summary report will be made available by emailing me at the address below.

I am seeking your willingness to send an electronic survey link, via e-mail, to teachers at your school. I will send the link to the school's office e-mail address on July 17th. Approximately 100 teachers in Otago will be surveyed. I believe teachers will find the survey interesting and it could help them reflect on some of the children they teach. If you would prefer your school not participate, it would be appreciated if you could contact me by e-mail or phone so that I can approach another school. Please also contact me if you wish to discuss any aspects of the study. Thank you very much for considering this request.

Researcher:
Pamela Seccombe
pamela.seccombe@gmail.com
(03) 471 2214

Supervisor:
Michael Townsend
michael.townsend@massey.ac.nz
(09) 414 0800, ex. 41099

Yours Sincerely
Pamela Seccombe

This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

The researcher(s) names above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 3505249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz

Appendix C: Low risk evaluation confirmation



MASSEY UNIVERSITY
TE KUNENGA KI PŪREHUROA

4 July 2012

Pamela Seccombe
40 St Leonards Drive
Saint Leonards
DUNEDIN 9022

Dear Pamela

Re: Teacher Beliefs about Socially Withdrawn Children

Thank you for your Low Risk Notification which was received on 22 June 2012.

Your project has been recorded on the Low Risk Database which is reported in the Annual Report of the Massey University Human Ethics Committees.

The low risk notification for this project is valid for a maximum of three years.

Please notify me if situations subsequently occur which cause you to reconsider your initial ethical analysis that it is safe to proceed without approval by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees.

Please note that travel undertaken by students must be approved by the supervisor and the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor and be in accordance with the Policy and Procedures for Course-Related Student Travel Overseas. In addition, the supervisor must advise the University's Insurance Officer.

A reminder to include the following statement on all public documents:

"This project has been evaluated by peer review and judged to be low risk. Consequently, it has not been reviewed by one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. The researcher(s) named above are responsible for the ethical conduct of this research.

If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research that you wish to raise with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact Professor John O'Neill, Director (Research Ethics), telephone 06 350 5249, e-mail humanethics@massey.ac.nz."

Please note that if a sponsoring organisation, funding authority or a journal in which you wish to publish requires evidence of committee approval (with an approval number), you will have to provide a full application to one of the University's Human Ethics Committees. You should also note that such an approval can only be provided prior to the commencement of the research.

Yours sincerely

John G O'Neill (Professor)
**Chair, Human Ethics Chairs' Committee and
Director (Research Ethics)**

cc Prof Michael Townsend
School of Education
Albany

Assoc Prof Helen Southwood, HoS
School of Education
Albany

Mrs Roseanne MacGillivray
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