Study title: **Parental Engagement in Sexuality Education: Investigating the Parent Perspective on Collaborative Partnerships in a NSW Catholic Primary School.**

This study investigated parent perspectives on collaborating with schools on Respectful Relationships, Consent and Sexuality Education (RRCSE) for children in Years 3 to 6 at an independent Catholic primary school in New South Wales, Australia. Educational policy acknowledges parents as the primary educators and encourages partnership between home and school, but there is very limited data about parents' experiences of collaborating in this sensitive area of the curriculum.

The theoretical framework was grounded in Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (1979) and the bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006), with a specific focus on the mesosystem between home and school. The study used a single-case mixed-methods methodology, which included a parent questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, informed by a constructivist–interpretivist paradigm. A total of 49 survey responses were received, of which 30 were completed questionnaires. Nine parents were interviewed. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, and qualitative data were analysed using reflexive thematic analysis, which is based on Braun and Clarke (2006, 2022).

The findings suggest that there is a distinction between parents' willingness to engage in their child's RRCSE and the opportunities for collaboration they experience. Parents valued engagement, but many reported limited opportunity to engage, uncertainty about curriculum content and timing, and feeling insufficiently prepared to continue these conversations at home. The four interrelated themes that emerged were collaboration that was reactive rather than intentionally designed; visibility, timing and invitation; emotional safety begins at home; and managing an accelerating value-sensitive world.

The findings highlighted that the parent experience is a key indicator of an authentic partnership. School communication was accepted and valued, although it was not necessarily experienced as collaboration. Viewed through Bronfenbrenner's mesosystem, the findings suggested that the existence of a home–school connection does not, in itself, establish a collaborative relationship. Rather, the nature of that relationship shapes parents' experiences of their engagement in their child's development.

A bridge analogy illustrates this distinction: communication makes the bridge visible, while invitation and reciprocal interaction create opportunities to crossing it. This study contributes to the knowledge base by highlighting visibility, timeliness, accessibility, invitation and reciprocity as important conditions for meaningful parent-school engagement. These findings provide a context-specific, evidence-informed basis for strengthening relationships with parent communities in primary school RRCSE.