Reconceptualising Parent Involvement in a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) School Community

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Statement of Authentication

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Marie Murphy
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Abstract

This professional doctorate explores parent involvement, particularly the importance of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) and their involvement in their children’s learning. The research was undertaken at Norton Public School (PS)\(^1\), a multicultural primary school with a population of 540 students consisting of 96 per cent from non-English speaking backgrounds. The aim of this research is to identify and analyse the range of practices used to support parent involvement and to evaluate their effectiveness to determine best working principles. Procedures and practices operating at the school to support parent involvement were surveyed and analysed. Further information was collected through focus groups and semi-structured interviews with parents, teachers, students, community partners and a school administration officer to seek the community’s views toward parent involvement and the current practices employed in the school. Qualitative methodology was employed as this presented as the most effective way of collecting the community’s experience in their own voices.

Bourdieu’s theory and research methodology was used to analyse both the parent involvement practices operating at Norton PS and the views of the school community toward these practices. A Bourdieusian field analysis was also conducted to investigate the operation of power in the school and the impact of habitus, capital and cultural reproduction which provides the framework for looking into the organisational and cultural blocks that restrict parent involvement. In addition the impact of leadership was considered in relation to these findings. While the school offered a range of activities to support parent involvement in their children’s learning, the organisation and tacit expectations of the school limited the involvement of CALD parents. This research led to a reconceptualisation of what parent involvement means for CALD parents, the role of parents in a multicultural school and how to go about developing culturally appropriate parent involvement practices. Culturally appropriate parent involvement was supported by community consultation, teacher professional learning, distributing leadership and working with community partners. The results suggest the importance of analysing the school field, acknowledging the complexities that arise and working with the community to develop culturally respectful solutions to support parent involvement.

\(^1\) This is a pseudonym for the school.
Acknowledgements

The focus of this professional, personal and scholarly work was to build knowledge and understanding of parent-school relationships in a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) school. This work has required wisdom, understanding, determination and patience from many people and, itself, has been built on relationships.

I am appreciative for the endless support of many interested friends, colleagues, family and members of the community. Specifically I want to acknowledge the staff, parents, students and community of the school referred to as Norton PS in this doctorate who shared and explored their environment with me. The school and its community proved to be endlessly interesting and worthy of investigation.

My deep thanks go to my supervision panel Peter Bansel, Tania Ferfolja and Jacqui D’warte who were challenging, inspiring, patient, honest, and generous.

To Linda Magson who was always there with endless skilled support and to the Gourmet Riders who helped me maintain the pace.
A Narrative of Personal, Professional and Scholarly Development

Looking Back to See Forward

This narrative relates a temporal account of my professional, personal and scholarly exploration of parent involvement in a culturally and linguistically diverse school community (CALD) at Norton Public School (PS). In addition to tracking a temporal trajectory, the narrative locates the research on parent involvement in a CALD school community within the broader context of general parent involvement in schools. In so doing, it identifies critical issues in the field and details the research problem and questions. The narrative then outlines the methodological approach employed in this research and the sequenced structure of the portfolio.\(^2\) It then explores the changes in the educational landscape that have occurred while this research was undertaken, looks at the broader significance and contribution that this work will provide to school principals and staff and identifies findings. The narrative concludes with a reflection that draws the work together and explores the full implications of and recommendations from the study. This narrative is one component of a portfolio consisting of seven separate and inter-related pieces undertaken as part of this doctoral study. It is formed by three scholarly papers (SP); three professional practice initiatives (PPI) together with this narrative.

Pursuing a professional doctorate provided me with a chance to explore the impact of my personal values on my professional life, and the ways these values have shaped my professional practice and motivated me to create learning partnerships with parents. Specifically these values are equity, social justice and opportunity. Facilitating equality of opportunity through education has been a significant driver throughout my career. I believe that education provides a key to life choices and gives learners of all ages access to opportunities that may offer advantages, such as further study, career options, plus health and wellbeing choices. Children’s learning is enhanced when parents, a child’s first teacher, continue to be involved in their learning process (Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 1986, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Such involvement in school may be difficult for parents new to a country or culture, especially those who lack language proficiency and knowledge of the education system and may have no flexibility in their working hours. Completing this professional doctorate provided me with the opportunity to ‘look back’ that is, consider my professional practice and my personal values and reflect on these through a scholarly lens. I could evaluate my work

\(^2\) The portfolio is this entire doctorate and the sequenced structure is made up of three separate and inter-related scholarly papers and three associated professional practice initiatives that are applications of the findings. The terms portfolio and doctorate are used interchangeable throughout the work.
through this lens to enable a new view to ‘see forward’ and work in a more appropriate way to develop culturally-appropriate practice.

As this research progressed, my developing scholarship led me to reflect on and question both my professional practices and how I expressed my personal values through my work. The goals of this current study were to identify two main questions. Firstly, what practices are required by schools to enable parents from CALD backgrounds to be involved in their children’s learning in ways they prefer and value, and secondly, what skills, knowledge and understandings did I need as a leader to facilitate culturally appropriate parent involvement in a school.

While it may not be possible for a school to meet the needs of all parents, as these needs are diverse and not always fully known, nevertheless, structures and practices are required in schools that create opportunities for parents to be involved. All parents are entitled to choose if and how they can be involved in their children’s education.

Though extensive investigation has been conducted on parent involvement in schools, there is little information that supports schools and parents to work together, particularly in relation to CALD parents (Kim, 2009). This may be due to the fact that schools can be challenging contexts to access, and that they have rigid organisation where interactions are often concealed by bureaucratic requirements, such as established protocols to communicate and report to parents (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Limited accessibility to schools may also be due to the fact that while parent involvement is supported by policy, only minimal operational support is provided in actual practice (Australian Institute for Teachers and School Leadership, 2011; Leading and Managing the School, 2000; National Declaration on the Educational Goals for Young Australians, 2008). Furthermore, little acknowledgement is given to the challenge presented to schools in establishing and maintaining a culture responsive to parent involvement with minimal system support (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010). The day-to-day realities of maintaining parent involvement, particularly for CALD parents who generally have multiple language and cultural requirements, is difficult and teachers receive little or no training in communicating with parents, either in pre-service teacher education or in ongoing teacher professional learning (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Cairney & Munsie, 1995; Jeynes, 2005).

This research considers the challenges in reconceptualising the role of CALD parents in their children’s learning to be twofold. The first challenge is the exploration of the complexities of the experiences of parents in the school environment, between home and school, and the tensions this exploration invites (Auerbach, 2007). The second, and critical part of this challenge, is the

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3 For more information on this subject matter, see Scholarly Paper 1.
identification of culturally appropriate actions and strategies that acknowledge and address the complexities and tensions parents and other members of the school community face. By identifying the complexities CALD parents face in seeking to be involved in their children’s learning and pursuing solutions to these complexities, this professional doctorate seeks to address the knowledge gap that exists regarding the involvement of CALD parents, a gap that is exacerbated by the limited availability of research-based recommendations on the matter. This research gap is evident in the Australian context. At a practical level, poor practice operating in schools where parent involvement procedures are rarely evaluated, further increases this knowledge gap (Epstein, 1995, 2010; Flessa, 2008). Yet, while nothing is done to facilitate involvement for CALD parents, they are placed in a deficit position and their potential is undervalued. This professional doctorate is an attempt to redress this positioning of CALD parents and to reconceptualise their role.

In order to address these complexities and the knowledge gap, I conducted research on parent involvement in a large multicultural primary school (540 students) with a significant population from non-English speaking backgrounds (96 per cent). As both principal of this school and principal researcher, I had the opportunity to develop practice-based theory informed by a Bourdieusian framework appropriate to this learning environment (Fullan, 2004, 2010). While there has been some research on parent involvement conducted in Australia (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Cardona, Watkins & Noble, 2009; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010), there is not a strong Australian voice currently in the literature on parent involvement in their children’s learning, particularly in relation to CALD parents. Nor is there much work from practitioner researchers. My goal is to develop knowledge, skills and an understanding of effective practice based on my professional and personal experience, informed by research and scholarly learning.

This narrative of professional, personal and scholarly development also describes my evolving leadership. Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Gu and Brown (2009) have suggested that the work of successful principals operates across three temporal phases. During the first phase, principals generally focus on the needs of the physical environment, and establish communication protocols and student management practices across the school. In the second phase, the principal’s focus turns to data-based decision-making to improve student learning and distributed leadership, and the third phase is characterised by a time of enrichment in the school.

During the first phase, I investigated the international research literature on parent involvement and compared the practices at Norton PS against findings from the literature. These findings informed the second phase in which I used this information to modify parent involvement practices and sought more direct input from the school community. In considering parent involvement during this
phase, I also turned to theory as a way of investigating and gaining a more nuanced understanding of the information I had collected. Bourdieu’s theoretical framework was used to analyse the practices in the school that supported or deterred parent involvement and consider the complexities and tensions that parents may experience in their relationship with the school (Bourdieu, 1973, 1984, 2007). The insights provided by theory impacted on phase three and gave me an enriched understanding of the existing parent involvement practices in the school and guided the development of distributed leadership and enhanced school practices to support parent involvement.

Critical issues in the field

This doctoral research is informed by a commitment to involve parents in their children’s learning and the day-to-day activities of the school regardless of their cultural or ethnic background. This commitment was built on the desire to create a socially-just environment. From an exploration of the extensive international research literature on parent involvement, a range of issues critical to understanding parent involvement practices were identified, and these issues shaped the research. Issues and themes in the field of parent involvement across different research locations and different school settings were identified including: the uncertain value of parent involvement in their children’s school-based learning; the range of definitions used to label the relationships between home and school; the socio-political framing of parent involvement; the often invisible or deficit location of CALD parents and the identified weaknesses in the research.

On subsequent explorations and reflection on the research, I identified a broader and arguably more complex range of issues and themes embedded within the parent involvement debate that impact on the field of education. These themes include: the impact of discrimination and power on parent interactions; and the operation of a binary view of parents in learning contexts where they are labelled as either ‘good’ or ‘not good’ that is, considered co-operative or non-co-operative, within a narrow set of school-defined expectations (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez, Schribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). These two themes provided great motivation to understand everyday practices at Norton PS and ascertain if the parent involvement practices were discriminatory. As I engaged with these issues, I progressed my understanding of the impact of these matters on parent involvement and sought to integrate my understandings into practice. Issues that impact on the implementation of parent involvement are discussed below.

The value of parent involvement

As noted earlier, there is broad agreement that parent involvement has the potential to impact positively on a range of student outcomes (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Henderson & Mapp, 2002;
Harris & Goodall, 2008; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Yet, the positive impact of parent involvement is often questioned and has received inconsistent and inconclusive support in the international literature (Fan & Chen, 2001; Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002). This inconsistency is due in part to the range of terms and definitions that refer to the relationship between school and home; the often narrow conceptualisation of parent involvement; and the variations in the quality of the research in the field, particularly for parents from CALD backgrounds. Further, the inconsistency arises from a lack of clarity of the purposes and possible benefits of involving parents in school life.

Definitions are important, as they contextualise an issue (Zyngier, 2003). Many definitions of parent involvement are uni-dimensional and do not reflect the complexity of this area, while others refer to a narrow range of practices in identifying parents’ involvement in their children’s learning (Kim, 2009). Based on the available research, it may be more appropriate to use the expression ‘term’ rather than ‘definition’, as the exact practice being discussed is rarely clearly defined. Rather, definitions are implied, adding to the lack of clarity regarding what constitutes parent involvement. The range of terms currently used include: parent involvement (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Chrispeels, 1996; Flessa, 2008; Jeynes, 2011); parent engagement (Calabrese Barton, Drake, Perez, St Louis, & George, 2004); parent participation (Henderson, 1987; Cairney & Munsie, 1995); family engagement (Auerbach, 2007; 2009); family school relationships (Lareau & Horvat, 1999); schools engaging with parents, family and community (Epstein, 1995, 2007, 2010; Mutch and Collins 2012); and family school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). While these terms are frequently used interchangeably, they often refer to a varied range of practices. For example, claims have been made that parent engagement suggests richer participation than parent involvement (Calabrese Barton, Drake, Perez, St Louis, & George, 2004). Again, despite such claims, the terms are not explicitly defined (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Chrispeels, 1996; Flessa, 2008; Jeynes, 2011). It is therefore difficult to demonstrate that parent engagement is more effective than parent involvement, as the behaviours implied by these terms so often remain unspecified.

Despite this variety and lack of clarity, the terms and definitions are generally derived from within the school context, with the school dictating the parents’ role (Kim, 2009). Furthermore, although different terms may be used, the practices under debate tend to remain unchanged (Baquedano-López, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013). For the purpose of consistency and clarity the term ‘parent involvement’ is used throughout this portfolio, and refers to the behaviours of parents, guardians, non-biological parents and school staff that support them to be involved in their children’s learning and in school life in general. While this definition may be considered ‘school generated’, it acknowledges the roles of all adults involved in the parent involvement process.
The deficit positioning of CALD parents

While the labelling of practices may have limited impact on school practice, I was struck by repeated references in the literature to the suggestion that parents from CALD backgrounds lacked interest in their children’s learning or their school. Parents from CALD backgrounds have frequently been afforded an invisible role or identified as disinterested (Freebody, Freebody, & Maney, 2011). When considered in the international literature, parents from CALD backgrounds tend to be grouped with low socio-economic status (low SES) communities and labelled as ‘deficient’ and failing to meet what is generally seen as the standard for the ‘desirable parent’ – white and middle class with an inherent understanding of the expectations of the school and able to readily meet its requests (Crozier, 2001; Roks & Potter, 2011). Parents from CALD backgrounds are those from non-English speaking backgrounds whose first language is other than English, or those who identify ‘as having a specific cultural or linguistic affiliation by virtue of their place of birth, ancestry, ethnic origin, religion, preferred language, language(s) spoken at home, or because of their parents’ identification on a similar basis’ (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). This group is diverse and complex, from a broad range of cultures with disparate experiences, rather than a homogeneous entity.

The homogeneous ‘deficit’ position applied to CALD parents is possibly the result of interest in parent involvement having its origin in compensatory programs developed in the United States of America and United Kingdom throughout the 1960s and 1970s. At this time, many programs were developed in response to the work of Coleman, Campbell, Hobson, McPartland, Mood, Weingeld and York (1966) on the equality of educational opportunity. Their research highlighted the impact of family and home backgrounds on student learning. They suggested that these home factors had a greater impact than school factors. Such compensatory programs were initially developed for parents from low SES and CALD backgrounds, and aimed to encourage them to become active in their children’s learning by providing support and insights into school culture. Similar programs were developed in the United Kingdom in response to the findings of the Central Advisory Council for Education Report (1967), popularly known as the ‘Plowden Report’. This response, which suggested CALD parents needed training to support their children’s learning and to fit into the school culture, showed little understanding of cultural diversity and the interest CALD parents have in their children.

These programs can be seen as a simplistic reaction to a set of complex cultural and socio-economic variables. Using the same data, the findings of Coleman et al. (1966) were reviewed by Mayeske, Okada and Beaton (1973) who posited that family variables beyond socio-economic status were of greater significance to student learning. Mayeske et al. (1973) suggested that in addition to identifying the parents’ cultural background, the impact of other family variables needed to be considered. These included: shared expectations for academic performance by parents and their
children; the length of time families spent supporting these expectation; and student attitude toward applying themselves to their work to achieve these identified expectations (Mayeske et al., 1973). While the work of Mayeske et al. (1973) questioned the view of Coleman et al. (1966), and has been supported by subsequent studies (Bloom, 1984; Clark, 1983; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Walberg, 1984), a deficit view has been maintained for many parents from CALD backgrounds. The continued maintenance of this deficit view of CALD parents has also led to low expectation of their involvement in their children’s school-based learning (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). This narrow framing and deficit location of CALD parents appears to have impacted on the research in the area of parent involvement, resulting in limited recommendations for practice and the continued devaluing of the role of CALD parents. Such findings indicated the need for a broader conceptualisation and understanding of the diversity of CALD parents. The research indicated that a more critical reflection of the heterogeneity of CALD parents would enable greater and more diverse options for involvement in their children’s education. I gained little direction for school practice from this narrow conceptualisation of CALD parents and sought further information by reading more broadly across the literature. As I read further and developed skills in critical reflection, my critique of the literature impacted on my practice. While only limited recommendations had come from current research, it was possible to use this scholarship and research to inform both my thinking and practice.

The socio-political framing of parent involvement

It is widely suggested in the literature that parent involvement is dictated by gender, race, class and bureaucratic requirements and the accompanying power relationships that operate in schools (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2006, 2007; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Reay, 1998, 2004). A significant amount of the current research on parent involvement originates from the United Kingdom and United States of America in response to the legislative mandates in operation and the socio-cultural context of both these countries. This research generally has a different interpretation of minority or diverse cultures than is employed or expressed in Australia. From a socio-political perspective, the terms ‘race’ and ‘class’ are used in a limited way in Australia, where issues related to equity are played out in a different manner, and referred to with different language from that in the United States and the United Kingdom. Class, culture and race tend to be muted terms and the term ‘socio-economic status’ (SES) is used in preference. This ignores or downplays both the gendered nature of parent involvement and the impact of access to resources for learning (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2006, 2007; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Reay, 1998, 2004). A limited view of cultural diversity and the richness and complexity of our culture is also played down in the Australian context. This can have the effect of downplaying the discrimination that arises from not identifying
or exploring cultural issues. This discrimination leads to, and impacts on, school practice and parents’ role in schools (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). As CALD families are frequently ignored in the literature and conflated with low SES communities, there is a widespread perception that the issues these two groups face are identical. Such a position fails to acknowledge the different conditions these groups encounter and the variation within these groups. This failure to differentiate both within and across these groups fragments discussion and limits the identification and application of research findings across groups. While the socio-cultural conditions of the majority of these studies are different from those in Australian schools, the significance of the impact of gender, race, class and power on parent involvement in school life, with a particular focus on CALD parents, in the Australian education context needs to be explored (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2006, 2007; Reay, 1998, 2004).

I started to consider how these socio-political issues may be impacting on practice at Norton PS and how they could be supporting unintentional discrimination. Reflecting on the literature regarding the socio-political issues, I became aware that it was possible that entrenched attitudes regarding gender, class, ethnicity and the use of power could be adversely impacting on parent involvement practices at Norton PS. What I had previously considered as ‘effective practices’, I could now see in a different and more critical light. Indeed, I became doubtful about the effectiveness of many school practices purporting to involve parents and considered if these practices further alienated them.

Additionally, the downplaying of the unique nature of parent involvement for CALD communities within the literature points to a possible reason for the relatively minor amount of research that has been conducted on parent involvement for CALD communities. Research that has been conducted tends to focus on specific cultural groups, for example Latino (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001) or Asian communities (Fan & Chen, 2001; Nakagawa, 2000). This leaves CALD families invisible in the larger debate. The parents who are the focus of the current study come from a broad range of cultural and linguistic groups, from both refugee and migrant backgrounds.

The operation of a binary view

In addition to the socio-political framing of parent involvement, there are a series of themes subtly operating across the space that suggest a simplistic binary view of parent involvement as ‘good’ or ‘not good’ (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2006, 2007; Roksa & Potter, 2011). Similarly, part of this binary discussion is the framing of parents as ‘visible’ or ‘not visible’, suggesting that parents need to be visible at the school to be an involved parents. This view devalues parenting that occurs at home or the additional parenting activities that are not seen by the school.

Other binary relationships include those that operate between teachers and parents where teachers hold power and parents do not – the relationship between the school and parents where school
possesses valuable information and parents’ information is given less value; and the relationship between school and home where school is presented as a valued place of learning and the home is not. These binary relationships imply a power differential that results in rigid positions and judgements that can limit the involvement of all those included in a child’s learning, including parents, teachers, students, school leadership and members of the community. While these binary relationships may be noted, they are rarely fully explored in the research literature and varied and multiple perspectives are rarely considered. Relationships between people from diverse cultures operate in the school field every day, form part of the complexity and richness of the environment and are worthy of exploration.

The diversity beyond the binary construction led me to reflect on both the range of issues that limit the opportunities for parents to readily access the school and the inherent challenge for schools to work beyond the limits of what appear to be binary relationships. The binary view of home and school as different places of learning reflects a significant tension that has a strong impact on parent involvement, tacitly suggesting that ‘school learning’ is superior to ‘home learning’ (Macfarlane, 2008). Yet, when it is accepted that learning occurs in different places, the tension may be reduced and the compatibility between these environments acknowledged (Weiss et al., 2009). Chrispeels (1996) and Pena (2000) note that teachers and parents seek different things from parent involvement, that they are not in opposition. Schools are complex environments and it is possible for power to be distributed in varied ways and for differences to co-exist. This reflection brought attention to the tensions that may be present in exploring parent involvement at Norton PS, and led me to reflect more critically on the relationships operating in the school in order to identify barriers and blocks to parent involvement.

The barriers and blocks to parent involvement

In addition to the narrow framing of parent involvement, there are organisational, psychological and systemic barriers and blocks to parent involvement (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). These are enmeshed in the school field and are the focus of prolific discussion throughout the parent involvement literature. Barriers to parent involvement include parents being unfamiliar with school expectations and unsure of how to respond to these expectations, and schools failing to plan for parent involvement or consider parents’ availability when organising activities (Crozier, 2001; Crozier and Davies, 2007; Horvat, Curci & Partlow, 2011; López, et al., 2001; Sheldon, 2003; Reay, 1998, 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009).

According to Epstein and colleagues, barriers can be reconceived as challenges in the school environment, challenges that can be identified and addressed by the school community (Hutchins, 2011). However, this conceptualisation can be seen as a school-centric view that fails to
acknowledge the many obstacles that parents face, particularly CALD parents, in attempting to be involved in their children’s learning or the fact that there are obstacles created by the larger socio-political framing of parent involvement. A broader range of barriers will be discussed throughout this portfolio and will be articulated as challenges when they refer to school responsibilities, and barriers when they refer to obstacles faced or perceived by parents.

I suggest that the extent of the challenges to involvement for CALD parents is yet to be fully identified in the research. These challenges may arise from the narrow framing of parent involvement and include a lack of clarity of the purpose of parent involvement (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Williams & Sánchez, 2011), lack of staff training in this area (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Cairney & Munsie, 1995; Hindin, 2010; Jeynes, 2005), poor evaluation practices (Epstein & Salinas, 2004; Flessa, 2008) institutionalised racism (Crozier, 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010) and lack of resources directed to the area (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010). These are all matters that need to be addressed by the school or at a systems level.

Despite the gaps in the research and the complexity of the field, parent involvement has continued to occupy a significant place in educational research and has more recently become part of the School Effectiveness Research agenda (SER), both in Australia and more broadly (Hattie, 2003; 2009). Yet, rather than focusing on how parents are involved and what appears to be working, much of the parent involvement research focuses on parents who do not appear to be involved or who are not involved in an ‘acceptable’ way (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Roksa & Potter, 2011). In particular, studies tend to focus on parents who do not comply with the often tacit school rules and therefore fail to meet the expectations that schools have (Auerbach, 2009; Horvat et al., 2011; Roksa & Potter, 2011).

**Turning point**

My exploration and reflection on the issues that inform the parent involvement discussion, particularly the deficit view of CALD parents and the socio-political framing of the discussion, led me to a turning point in my professional, personal and scholarly journey. Through my reflections on the parent involvement literature, I became more aware of the broad range of actions and interactions that formed and informed parent involvement at Norton PS. I was highly motivated by the research in this area and was keen to develop more effective practice. I was equally challenged by what I saw as a mismatch between discussions in the literature and what I considered to be happening at Norton PS. The notion that entrenched attitudes operating in the school may be leading to discriminatory practices and restricting opportunities for school members was confronting. Mills and Gale (2010, p. 2) have suggested that in schools in disadvantaged areas, teachers, parents and even students are involved in reproducing disadvantage. This reproduction of disadvantage has also been
described as cultural reproduction, where negative views are continued or reproduced and not challenged. Mills and Gale (2010) have also suggested that the school community can redress disadvantage and act to change the school environment and enhance learning. Norton PS is an example of a school considered to be in a disadvantaged area, with student results in literacy and numeracy below the national average and often low expectations of student performance from the teachers. This study on parent involvement explores the possibility of changing school practice and enhancing learning, together with building social cohesion and addressing discrimination with the school community. I approach this through analysing parent involvement and leadership practices. I also focus on social interactions, particularly between parents and teachers at Norton PS, to note if practices were discriminatory and went un-noticed or were ignored as acceptable practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989). 4

My response to the issues identified across the parent involvement debate has shaped my research interests and the subsequent investigation of parent involvement for CALD parents at Norton PS. A basic research problem requiring exploration was the gap in the literature regarding the role of parents from CALD backgrounds in their children’s school and learning (Kim, 2009). As discussed, my reading of the research literature suggested that the role of CALD parents’ has been oversimplified and that parents in this group are frequently perceived negatively and framed as deficient, or ‘not good’ parents (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2006, 2007). There appeared to be little space provided in the conceptualisation of CALD parents in the literature to note the richness that accompanies diversity, nor an acknowledgement of the time required for CALD parents to adjust to a new culture (Cardona et al, 2009; Mills & Gale, 2010; Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). It seemed to me that parent involvement for CALD families had been narrowly and inadequately conceptualised which has limited the development of parents’ involvement in schools with CALD communities. Little direction can be distilled from the negative conceptualisation of an issue, while possible practices can be drawn from acknowledging the richness in diverse parent experiences (Bryk, 2010). Most significantly, the ‘how’ of parent involvement appears to be missing in the debate. As a practitioner, I considered that an integration of what is known of parent involvement with the specific needs of CALD parents was required in order to identify the knowledge, understanding and skills required by school staff and leadership to support and develop the involvement of CALD parents. The purpose of this investigation was to form a positive conceptualisation of parent involvement for a CALD community and identify ‘how’ to develop and imbed parent involvement practices sensitive to this school’s context. Based on my professional experience and my scholarly reading, this study sought to answer five broad questions.

4 See Professional Practice Initiative 2.
1. How do teachers perceive parent involvement and its impact on the school community and student learning?

2. How do parents perceive parent involvement and its impact on their children’s education?

3. How do students perceive parent involvement and its impact on their experience at school?

4. How do community members perceive parent involvement and its impact on the school community and student learning?

5. What leadership practices and school innovations can support parent involvement in a large culturally-diverse community school?

Theoretical and methodological position

As the goal of this study is to investigate parent involvement practices and develop culturally appropriate practices for a CALD community, the methodological approach needs to be sensitive to this community. As I chose to investigate the operation of parent involvement within the Norton PS, I sought the experiences, insights, understanding and ideas of stakeholders from the school community: parents, teachers, students, administration staff together with staff from community organisations that supported the school. I chose to engage with the experiences of the community, to have them tell their stories in their voices as the community could tell their story far better than I could relate their experiences for them (Bourdieu, 1973, 1984, 2007; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). As a white middle-class woman and school principal, it was important that I explored the community’s experiences in a way that was respectful and allowed their voices to be heard. Thus, qualitative methodology seemed most suitable for this purpose and an appropriate match to both the phenomenon being investigated and the questions being asked (Merriam, 1998; Oakley, 2004). The methodological approach was also influenced by the theoretical framework and methodology of Bourdieu (1973, 1984, 2007) whose work has been used extensively to investigate and explain the phenomenon and impact of social reproduction and discrimination, particularly in the field of education. Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, specifically the concepts of capital, habitus and field and the interrelation between them, facilitated an understanding of the dynamics that operated in the school and their impact on the operation of parent involvement. As principal and researcher, Bourdieu’s theoretical framework provided me with the tools and language for this investigation and also created some distance from the field, making it possible for me to identify and analyse the interactions and the power dynamics that operated at the school.

In addition to the collection of data from the school members, this study also systematically identified and investigated the services and programs that supported parent involvement in the
school, as well as the strengths and weaknesses of these practices. As this study has also been strongly shaped by reflective practice arising from my increasingly scholarly perspective, I became more analytical toward my own leadership practices and questioned the value and impact of many of the educational and leadership practices that I had employed for numerous years. As my understanding and insights toward parent involvement developed, I also sought insights into the relationship operating between parent involvement and leadership. This became a significant element of the research. Although I had gathered the insights of other groups in the school, I had failed to specifically investigate the impact and effectiveness of my leadership. Beyond the formal collection of data, there were further opportunities to identify, analyse and assess the operation of parent involvement at the school as an ongoing practice.5

Structure of the work

This Doctor of Education is a professional doctorate (EdD) and as such, is composed of seven distinct, interrelated sections that demonstrate my professional, scholarly and personal exploration of the reconceptualisation of the role of CALD parents in their children’s learning. The work reflects my developing knowledge in the area of parent involvement, the practices operating in the school to support parent involvement and the changes in my professional practice in response to this learning. In addition to this narrative, the portfolio for this study is composed of three scholarly papers (SP) and three Professional Practice Initiatives (PPI) conducted at the school and informed by the knowledge gathered through the scholarly investigation. The scholarly papers are:

SP 1 – a literature review of parent involvement

SP 2 – an investigation of the impact of theory on the operation of parent involvement for CALD parents from a Bourdieusian perspective

SP 3 – a literature review of school leadership.

The Professional Practice Initiatives (PPI) are investigations and analyses of the existing practices at the school based on the information synthesised in the scholarly papers. The foci of the Professional Practice Initiatives are:

PPI 1 – an analysis of practices in the school to support parent involvement

PPI 2 – an investigation of the attitudes of the members of the school community toward parent involvement

5 This Bourdieusian analysis will be discussed in detail in Scholarly Paper 2.
PPI 3 – a systematic reflection and evaluation of the leadership strategies used at the research site to embed parent involvement in school practices.

Scholarly Paper 1 (SP1) is a literature review identifying trends and issues in the area of parent involvement with a focus on CALD parents. As noted earlier, significant insights drawn from the review include the range of definitions used across this area and the view of CALD parents as invisible or failing in their duties, which has led to schools introducing interventions. The identification of barriers or challenges to parent involvement are significant as understanding the impact of the barriers to CALD parents provides an understanding of why there is a deficit view operating in schools that presents CALD parents in a negative way. More importantly, understanding the impact of barriers helps initiate different ways of understanding the diversity of CALD parents and how to implement parent-involvement programs that benefit all.

Three issues appear to dominate the discussion on parent involvement. Firstly, parent involvement is consistently considered to be a good idea that fails to be supported at a systemic or policy level (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Cairney & Munsie, 1995; Weiss et al., 2008). Secondly, CALD parents are frequently identified as problematic to the operation of parent involvement in schools as they often fail to act in expected ways (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001). Thirdly, the practical implementation of involving parents is constantly thwarted by barriers parents experience in schools and organisational-based challenges, occurring at a school or systems level (Crozier, 2001; Crozier and Davies, 2007; Horvat, et al., 2010; Lopez et al. 2001; Sheldon, 2003; Reay, 1998, 1999; Turney & Kao, 2009). A number of frustrations emerged in exploring the literature as the discussion of the issues often failed to progress the case and consistently revisited the same issue or material that identified the problems with both school and parents, rather than suggesting possible solutions. The location of CALD parents in a negative or deficit position, as well as school practices that fail to involve parents, seem to be consistent themes in the literature.

While challenges and barriers are frequently identified in the research, there are a number of issues that remain underexplored. As noted earlier, these issues include – but are not limited to – the poor resourcing of parent involvement programs at a systems level; the lack of adequate provision of pre-service training for professionals to support parent involvement and; the unconscious racism that appears to operate in schools and impacts negatively on parents’ involvement.

In response to the issues identified in the literature review, the first Professional Practice Initiative (PPI 1) focuses on the identification and analysis of parent involvement practices operating at Norton PS. Building on the knowledge gained from the literature review, I sought to investigate how, if at all, these views and understanding were evident at the school. This included an exploration of the
context of the research, the identification of the parent involvement strategies used and the effectiveness of current practices. This PPI sought to identify if the programs operating at the school were responsive to parents’ needs and fostered parent involvement; if there were a range of opportunities for parents to be at Norton PS; if parents’ roles in learning were acknowledged by the school; and if there were barriers to parents’ involvement at the school.

Robinson (2007) has suggested that principals are challenged by the task of identifying, interpreting and integrating findings from research into their practice. At this point of the research process, I faced a significant challenge. I understood that to analyse and integrate research findings into practice, I required distance from the data, a deeper understanding of the school context and the skill to adopt or adapt learnings, or develop and implement strategies to suit the school context. In response to these insights from the research, I challenged my understanding and sought to consider what was occurring in the school from a different viewpoint, that is, I started to interpret my actions and the actions of those around me differently and became more alert to both different types and a broader range of information. Engaging with the parent involvement research literature led me to identify matters significant to the operation of parent involvement at Norton PS.

The analysis of parent involvement research conducted in Scholarly Paper 1 brought my attention to the deficit view of CALD parents and their involvement within the school. This deficit view, though it was consistently identified across the parent involvement research, is not helpful to the development of practice capable of supporting parent involvement at Norton PS. I was aware I needed to extend my scholarship in order to create effective parent programs and offer different options for parents who appeared to be identified within the deficit position. I also needed to explore the theoretical dimensions of parent involvement to better inform my understanding of the complexities involved. I required an analytical lens through which to not only review but also to consider how to disrupt the beliefs and practices at the school.

Based on the insights developed in PPI 1, Scholarly Paper 2 (SP2), focuses on the work of Bourdieu (1973, 1984, 2007) to further explain why parents from CALD backgrounds have been placed in a deficit position, and what can be done to assist parents to be acknowledged and involved in meaningful ways in their children’s school and learning. It was also important to identify whether the school maintained a deficit view of parents from a CALD background through its actions and policies. Because the literature fails to identify the particular circumstances of CALD parents and what is required to encourage and maintain parent involvement, there are no guidelines for CALD parent involvement for schools to use to develop programs. (Kim, 2009). Using elements from Bourdieu’s theory of practice, this scholarly paper investigates the terrain CALD parents negotiate as they learn
about school culture in a new country, where the signposts and rules may not always be explicit. Furthermore, Bourdieusian methodology and theoretical framework provides the lens and tools needed to organise the research; it allows me to reflect in a different way on the information available in the school. As it progressed, this paper became an investigation of the operation of cultural reproduction and the impact of this reproduction on parent involvement. The analysis conducted at the school identified the impact of the day-to-day interactions, drawing attention to the operation of power and the impact of the habitus and capital on all stakeholders. Seeking to gain a better understanding of these practices, the Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, cultural capital, social capital and field have been of particular value to this study as they are empirically derived and have allowed me to reflect on the behaviours of all members of the community and analyse the impact of relationships functioning in this microcosm of the field of education (Maton, 2012). Using these concepts also made it possible to identify how power and capital were distributed in the field and if there was reciprocity.

Using the insights drawn from Bourdieusian theoretical exploration (1973, 1984, 2007), the focus of Professional Practice Initiative 2 (PPI 2) moved to an investigation of community views, perceptions and attitudes toward parent involvement. This investigation supports the development of a deeper understanding of the experience of the Norton PS community, their specific needs and how parent involvement could operate effectively for this community. This was done through a focus group interview with parents, teachers and a community partner, and semi-structured interviews with ten participants including parents, teachers, an administrative officer and a community partner. A focus group interview was also conducted with students. I sought the views of teachers, parents, students and members of the community as each group has unique insights into the complex relationship between parents and the school staff (Shumow & Harris, 2000). The findings and the themes that emerged from the analysis of data are discussed in depth.

The Bourdieusian framework made it possible to view what was happening in the school in a different way, to use the available information differently and to develop practice that was more responsive to the community’s needs. Instead of being in the position where nothing constructive appears to happen in schools to support parent involvement, I had field-based information to inform my professional practice, support change and develop suitable parent involvement practices (Kim, 2009). Through the application of a Bourdieusian analysis to the attitudes and opinions of the school community, I garnered context-specific information to inform school-based practice. In this way I identified explicit information regarding the ‘how’ of parent involvement which may have broader application and support parent involvement in other school communities.
The analysis of community feedback regarding parent involvement from PPI 2 confirmed the insights from PPI 1 regarding the deficit view held about parents at Norton PS. This information further informed modifications to the parent-involvement programs operating at the school. The insights informed by a Bourdieusian view of the interactions occurring in the school highlighted the need for leadership capable of understanding the operation of power and discrimination in the school and work with the community to lead the changes required from all stakeholders.

While I only had rudimentary knowledge of the theory behind contemporary educational leadership when I started this thesis, I did have extensive leadership experience and had participated in a range of professional learning programs. Yet, I was aware I needed to draw further on current leadership research to develop a deeper understanding of theory and integrate this learning into my professional practice. Hence, leadership of parent involvement became the focus of the third scholarly paper.

Scholarly Paper Three (SP 3) explores the complex role of principals as educational leaders in schools. In this paper, I identify the principal’s role as the lead learner in the school and explore the current international research to explore the broad role of school leaders and the range of tasks and responsibilities they need to maintain. SP3 highlights the complexity of the role, the range of tasks leaders are required to perform and the impact of the role of an instructional leader. The need for leaders to have a varied range of skills to respond to the demands of the specific school environment and the benefits of distributed leadership were also identified. Significantly, a recurrent theme in the literature was the lack of systems-level training to support leadership development. The literature review also identified the lack of research acknowledging the principal’s role in parent involvement and working with parents. There is little acknowledgement of a principal’s role in supporting CALD parents. Generally, the research literature fails to integrate the leadership of parent involvement into the broader field of educational leadership and reflects a poor understanding of both parent involvement and the importance of cultural capital and power relationships in schools.

Professional Practice Initiative 3 (PPI3) builds on the review of the leadership literature and reflects on school-based data at Norton PS to identify the impact of leadership on parent involvement. This section of the professional doctorate is arguably the most significant to this research, as it synthesises my learning across the areas of parent involvement, school leadership and Bourdieusian theory, and analyses the impact of this learning in practice. It is clear from the research literature that effective leadership responds to the specific demands of the school context. Drawing on the information identified through the Bourdieusian field analysis conducted at the school, and the findings from the literature review of leadership, I sought to specifically identify and reflect on the
leadership actions that had been implemented at the school. These were considered across the three phases, identified by Day et al. (2009) as discussed at the beginning of this narrative. PPI 3 demonstrated the role of leadership in a process of change and how parent involvement was reconceptualised at the school and how it generated a model of parent involvement that can now be implemented in other schools, particularly those with large numbers of CALD parents.

By exploring the impact of school leadership on parent involvement, I found I was reinvestigating many issues that had been identified earlier in the research. During PPI 3 I moved from a professional and personal perspective to an enriched scholarly perspective. This enabled a deeper and more complex account of the investigation into parent involvement and the culture of the school. I moved from a position of leadership of parent involvement to leadership for parent involvement. During this phase I continued distributing leadership across the school, particularly for parent involvement, using the understanding, skill and interest of others to support this agenda.

Drawing on the findings from PPI 2, I developed a clearer understanding of the operation of discrimination and cultural reproduction in the school. These insights had significant implications for my professional practice and the development of practice-based theory (Fullan, 2004, 2010, 2011).

Reflecting on my practice of using the information and records I collected as principal, I realised that that I had been using only part of the information available. I had often failed to interrogate this information, ask the ‘right’ questions or synthesise the information to support my practice. With the addition of scholarship, it was possible to use the information collected to further inform my practice. Using a range of data, I clarified and made connections between different forms of information to build new learning (Ellingson, 2009; Fine, 1994). Analysis of the data confirmed my earlier understanding of the value of parent involvement which was enriched by establishing relationships among theory, practice, research and scholarship. My knowledge of the ‘how’ to implement parent involvement increased. These issues are explored throughout the final Professional Practice Initiative 3.

**Change in the landscape**

There is no doubt that the social and educational landscape in which parent involvement now operates has changed during the time this research was conducted. The Family, School and Community Partnership Bureau was established by the Australian Commonwealth Government in 2010, and is responsible for progressing work and research that is conducted among family, school and community. The research and practical ideas developed by the Bureau are available to all schools.
Significant changes have also occurred in the broader educational context during the time of the research, including the development and implementation of national standards for teachers and national standards for principals by the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Included in both these standards is the requirement to engage and work with the community, which clearly articulates the professional behaviour expected of all educators to work with parents, caregivers and community members (AITSL, 2011). Government schools have also been given increased autonomy, have greater financial flexibility and can choose to direct additional resources to parent involvement.

There have been further changes that promise to have a significant impact on parent involvement. At the beginning of this study, computers, communication technology and access to the internet were expensive resources; this is no longer the case. In the past new residents to Norton, particularly refugees and migrants, generally did not have computers or access to the internet. In addition, smartphones were not readily available at the time. Consequently, the impact and use of technology is not evident throughout this study. While technology has been a minor player throughout the work and is now used more extensively, particularly for learning and communication (including the school website), this was not the case at the beginning of this research. Currently translated documents are provided in major community languages at a systems level to support communication with parents from CALD backgrounds, thus providing support communicating with parents and conserving school-based resources. There continues to be many households in the Norton PS area without a computer and, as a consequence, teachers create additional opportunities for students, who do not possess a computer at home, to access them during the day. Given the importance of communicating with families, welcoming them into the school and developing relationships, technology has a great capacity to support parent involvement and is now integrated into daily practice.

Benefits and broader impact of my work

Conducting this research on parent involvement has had an impact beyond Norton PS and goes some way toward addressing a gap in the research on parent involvement for CALD communities, particularly in the Australian context. This work also offers a model of working with the school community to address educational issues and challenges that are present in a school context, where input from the community to develop context-specific solutions can be evaluated.

In addition to providing a model to support ongoing learning for school leaders, I have had the opportunity to present the research process and findings resulting from this professional doctorate at the local, state and national level. This includes keynote presentations at the 2013 National Parental Engagement Roundtable for the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau, at the
Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities Annual Conference (2014) and at the South West Sydney Primary Principals Association, NSW (2013).^6

Reflection

This study aims to explore both the role of parents’ involvement in their children’s school-based learning for parents from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD), and reconceptualises this role. While the benefits of parent involvement in their children’s learning are acknowledged, fewer parents from CALD backgrounds appear to be involved (Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pena, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006) due to restrictive school practices (Carreon, et al., 2005; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Reay, 1999, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

This professional doctorate has combined a number of bodies of knowledge to address the gap in the literature exploring parent involvement for CALD parents and reconceptualising this role. Research literature on parent involvement and school leadership has been integrated with Bourdieusian theory and research methodology to analyse both the parent-involvement practices operating at Norton PS and the views of the school community toward these practices. A Bourdieusian field analysis was conducted to investigate the operation of power in the school and the impact of habitus, capital and cultural reproduction. The findings drawn from this investigation have been integrated to support learning in the community and develop culturally appropriate parent-involvement practices sensitive to the school context. The information drawn from this research functions across two levels, as research and also as practice, research informed by practical strategies and practice informed by theoretical understanding. It is clear that parent involvement needs to be viewed as both a field of research and a field of practice. Additionally connections need to be created between these two bodies of knowledge to support action in the field (Lingard & Christie, 2003).

Findings

In reconceptualising parent involvement, this study specifically sought to identify the perceptions of representative members of the school community toward practices and uncover the perceptions of parents, teachers, students, community partners and administration officers. The study also sought to identify leadership practices and school innovations that can support parent involvement. While the views toward parent involvement varied according to the representatives’ role and their position in the field, parent involvement was generally valued and clear links were made between parent

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^6 Appendix 1: Conferences and Presentations documents the different presentations I have delivered of this research.
involvement and student learning. There were also links identified between parents’ involvement, forming relationships and social cohesion. In addition to acknowledging the significance of parent involvement, the practices that the school community suggested supported parent involvement including: communication, proficiency in English language, the formation of relationships and accessing information about the school, the curriculum and broader community resources. Barriers to parent involvement were also identified and include the operation of power in the school, the inflexible timetabling of parent activities and the need for further efforts to support two-way communication. There was some commonality between the findings from this study and the findings gleaned from the research literature. The common elements included the importance of communication, relationships, the school environment, the range of programs offered, and leadership and school collaboration with the broader community to support the parent involvement goals.

Beyond these findings, the Bourdieusian field analysis also indicated the impact of power, habitus and capital in the field and how these affect parents’ opportunities for involvement. The field analysis also provided information on the operation of relationships in the school. The capital and habitus of CALD parents is often given limited value by the school and hence parents may spend little time in the field and miss opportunities to display their informed habitus and capital and attract additional capital (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mills & Gale, 2010; Reay, 2004).

Information from the field analysis and evaluation of parent involvement programs also provided insights of ways to address the power imbalance and redress the impact of individual’s habitus and capital. Integrating the learning from the community with the insights from Bourdieusian theory made it possible to develop culturally sensitive programs.

Drawing on information from the data analysis, it appears that parent involvement functions on four levels at the school:

1. informal involvement
2. formal involvement
3. individual involvement at the teacher and classroom level
4. the social interaction that operates between parents in the school field.

Informal parent involvement refers to casual involvement, for example parents’ visits to the school to collect their child. Formal parent involvement occurs when parents attend meetings, P&C or parent classes, help with dance tuition, make costumes and cover new books at the school.
Individual teachers’ involvement with parents is supported through ongoing conversations before or after school. Opportunities for social interaction, particularly for parents, are possible when parents have space in the school. All levels of involvement offer opportunities for parents to be at school and activate their cultural capital and also build social capital. At the informal or formal level there is a message that parents matter, yet there may be a different level of interaction at the individual classroom and teacher level.

The information collected in this study suggests that the relationship between a teacher and the parent is important in terms of how parents operate in the school, and parents’ sense of competence and feelings of belonging (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Regardless of school policy or parent-involvement practices, the actions of each individual teacher are of great importance to parent involvement and appear to have the capacity to disturb or maintain cultural reproduction. This relationship may be of greater value than school policy and school-level practices, particularly in light of the feedback from the community. In the parent involvement literature, teachers and parents are often presented as being in opposition or enemies (Cho, & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005; Pena, 2000). While teachers and parents may seek different things from parent involvement, this binary interpretation of the teacher-parent relationship does not support either an understanding, or the operation of parent involvement (Chrispeels, 1996). Teachers’ professional learning that promotes teachers’ understanding of the impact of their relationship on parents’ actions would support parent involvement.

**The ‘how’ of parent involvement**

A major contention of this work was that the ‘how’ of parent involvement, particularly for CALD parents, was unknown. The findings drawn from PPI 1 provided some insight regarding the ‘how’ of parent involvement for this community. Practices that support parent involvement include identifying the purpose of parent involvement, assessing the need for integrated planning of parent involvement; increasing parent input into the operation of activities; support for teachers to work with parents and adjusting organisational arrangements that limit parent involvement. These findings, plus the insights from the community and the information drawn from the research literature, supported further development of parent involvement at Norton PS. This led to the introduction of programs in the school that considered parent needs, supported communication, provided opportunities for parents’ input and also provided some opportunities for parents to make decisions.

While the views of the community were insightful and led to changes in school practice, these community views were not capable of providing an in-depth view of the complex relationships that
were in operation at the school and that impacted on parent involvement. Critically, this understanding was required to provide conditions and develop practices that provided a range of ‘legitimate’ reasons for parents to be at the school. When a Bourdieusian interpretation of these finding was employed, together with the insights gleaned from the Bourdieusian field analysis, richer more nuanced information became available. This view provided further insight regarding the ‘how’ of parent involvement, suggesting that many subtle changes can be made in schools to disturb cultural reproduction, discrimination and create opportunities for CALD parents to have a broader range of opportunities in the field. The reciprocal nature of parent involvement facilitates these changes as parents’ input can both inform the field and be informed by the field.

An additional condition required to address the ‘how’ of parent involvement is leadership and ensuring that leaders have the knowledge, skill and understanding necessary to identify and challenge discrimination and cultural reproduction. While leadership was not directly identified through the interviews conducted with the school community, it is clear from the specific exploration on leadership in the school that distributed leadership contributed to the development of parent involvement. Based on the data drawn from this study it is clear that distributed leadership that responds to the needs of the school context is required. Context sensitive leadership has the capacity to develop a culture of learning by working with the community and introducing practices that create opportunities for parents to be in the school field by being welcoming (Jeynes, 2013). In a welcoming environment it is possible for parents to be at school and demonstrate their interest in their children’s learning. Equally, conditions need to acknowledge teachers as partners in learning so that it is possible for them to develop the skill to form relationships with parents that are supportive of learning. As leadership can unintentionally contribute to the maintenance of educational inequality, leadership is also required to question school practices that sustain discrimination or fail to acknowledge the diversity of a community (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). When discrimination and racism are not identified or acknowledged and remain unconscious, these practices are not available for scrutiny and can be left as the unspoken doxa and therefore accepted (Baquedano-López et al., 2013).

In order for leaders to challenge these practices they need to be able to identify practices that appear to support cultural reproduction. These practices include the narrow view of acceptable habitus and capital operating in the school field (Mills & Gale, 2010), the impact of the fixed school structure on the interactions of CALD parents (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003) and the limited school opportunities for parents to activate and demonstrate their capital in the field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). A theoretical understanding of these practices is required if they

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7 Doxa refers to accepted ways of thinking. It will discussed in detail in Scholarly Paper 2.
are to be challenged. Such shared knowledge has the capacity to challenge the deficit location of CALD parents and locate them as partners in their children’s learning. Leaders are needed who have the knowledge, skill and understanding to integrate the ‘what’ and the ‘how’ of parent involvement to inform effective practice.

Gaps remain in the school’s parent involvement practice as ongoing, effective evaluation practices are yet to be established in the school. Further, the school is yet to develop sensitivity in acknowledging home-based parenting. Failure to address these will weaken the operation of parent involvement (Flessa, 2008; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009). This analysis has provided an in-depth evaluation of parent involvement in the school and additional opportunities for parents now exist within current practice including the annual Community Consultation and the Parent Teacher Action Team. To maintain effective parent involvement it is critical that discussion continues with the community to identify how parent involvement will continue to operate. As parent involvement is a process, the next stage in the development of practice in the school is exploring how to evaluate parent involvement and the continued development of appropriate teacher professional learning.

**Conclusion**

This investigation has combined scholarly research on both parent involvement and leadership with a qualitative study of the views of the community toward parent involvement. The information collected has been considered from a Bourdieusian perspective to identify the conditions impacting on parent involvement for CALD parents and to reconceptualise parents’ role in their children’s learning.

Parent involvement is about learning: learning for parents, students and the community. Parent involvement is also about learning from parents. The question remains: Does parent involvement lead to improved student outcomes? During the time of this investigation, parent involvement has increased and student results on the national testing program (NAPLAN) have improved, however, it is not possible to claim that the improvement in student performance was solely the result of increased parent involvement. Schools are complex environments and a range of practices were addressed and developed during this time including pedagogical practices, student behaviour programs, professional teacher learning and adjustments to the environment. While the development and reconceptualising of parent involvement may have contributed to the improved student outcomes, this is only one element of effective school practice. As Epstein and colleagues (1995) note that it is unrealistic to claim that parent involvement will lead to improved student outcomes but that there are valuable outcomes from involving parents in schools including richer
curriculum and more equitable communities. I would suggest that the work of parent involvement at Norton PS, as evidenced by the data collected through the PPIs, has contributed to the development of social justice and cohesion, improved communication, improved pedagogy, and minimised discriminatory practices in the school. The work conducted at Norton PS during the time of this professional doctorate has been acknowledged beyond the school with the school being awarded a Cohesive School Community Award (State), a Literacy and Numeracy Award (National) and a Leadership Award (regional).

What are the implications of this study for parent involvement for CALD parents? This study has contributed to the knowledge and understanding of culturally-appropriate practices that have the capacity to support parent involvement for CALD parents and address school practices that limit parent access. Further, this study has demonstrated the need for practitioner-driven investigation, the value of deep analysis of a situation or field and the power of calling on the knowledge and experience of the community. Change was required in the school to support parent involvement for the CALD parent community, and the knowledge, skill and understanding generated through this study has facilitated these changes. Using a Bourdieusian framework, Yang (2014) identified four conditions needed to support change in the field. These are:

1. a discernible difference between habitus and field
2. specific pedagogy
3. reflexive practice
4. an open system where borders are blurred and fields exhibit similarities.

Findings from this investigation suggest that two additional conditions are required to support change in a school: relationship and leadership. Though changes required at a systems level could more readily address the shortcomings of the education system in addressing the operation of parent involvement for CALD parents, it appears that subtle changes made at a school level can contribute to these changes.

I commenced this personal, professional and scholarly journey in reconceptualising CALD parents’ role in their children’s learning with the view that there was a knowledge gap in the research literature on parent involvement. Significantly, I have discovered that the knowledge gap extended to the practice, including my own. I had a commitment to support social justice through my work, yet I lacked the skill to facilitate the development of such practices. I had some knowledge, skill and

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8 Discussed in Scholarly Paper 2.
understanding and also good intentions, but these were inadequate; my educational vision and skills were limited. Knowledge of the research literature and Bourdieusian theory have been invaluable for my own understanding and were required to integrate with my personal commitment and professional skill. I could not develop the ‘how’ of parent involvement for CALD parents without synthesising these different areas of knowledge.

Reflecting on the research literature, engaging with Bourdieusian theory and exploring the school field with the school community was a turning point. Combining theory, research and community input enabled the uncovering of practices that hindered the development of parent involvement and facilitated the development of culturally-appropriate practice to enhance parent involvement. A detailed account of the research follows.
Parent involvement is both a field of research and an area of practice. The literature reviewed explores issues and trends in the area of parent involvement. It aims to synthesise current research findings to develop practice that supports learning in a large multicultural school. This review is organised into seven sections. The first section examines the nomenclature used to define parent involvement and presents an operational definition to be used throughout this research project. Section two explores the importance and value of parent involvement. Section three presents an overview of the experience of CALD parents’ involvement in their children’s school-based learning. Section four explores the challenges and barriers to the operation of parent involvement. Limitations of the research literature are considered in section five and section six considers the theoretical understanding that underpin this research. Finally, a way forward is recommended to facilitate the nexus between policy and practice, and to address the needs of CALD parents in their attempts to be involved in their children’s school and learning in meaningful ways.

There is general acceptance in international research literature that parents’ involvement in their children’s school-based learning has a range of positive effects on students’ educational outcomes. These include improvement in behaviour, attendance and academic performance (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). While these positive effects also hold across racial and ethnic groups, fewer parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds appear to be actively involved in their children’s school-based learning (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2003; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pena, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). This apparent lack of involvement from CALD parents may be the result of barriers and challenges they perceive to exist that block their efforts to be involved in their children’s schooling (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Reay, 1999, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). At times the barriers and challenges CALD parents experience are due to their perceptions or lack of confidence, frequently, in response to school-based practices (Carreon et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Williams & Sanchez, 2011).

While involving parents in schools is actively supported in educational policy (Blackmore & Hutchinson, 2010; Cairney & Munsie, 1995), educators find involving parents, particularly parents from CALD backgrounds, a major challenge (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Smalley & Reyes-Blanes, 2001).
Despite lengthy debate on the benefits to schools that involve parents as active partners in their children’s learning, there is limited research suggesting effective processes or specific strategies schools can employ to involve parents (Kim, 2009). Furthermore, there is limited evidence about which specific parent behaviours support student learning (Jeynes, 2011; Kim, 2009). This is due in part to the complexity of the area and the number of variables at play among children, parents and schools; and the different and often conflicting expectations of parents held by different stakeholders such as the education department, principals, teachers and parents themselves. (Chrispeels, 1996; Harris & Goodall, 2007).

To date, much of the parent-involvement research has focused on parents who do not appear to be involved, or parents who are not involved in an acceptable way in their children’s schooling (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002). Despite what appears to be CALD parents’ low levels of interest in being involved in their children’s schooling, facilitating involvement can be challenging to both understand and implement, as conventional school practices often fail to meet the needs of CALD parents (Doucet, 2011; Kim, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lim, 2012). Rather than focusing on how schools can identify and address parents’ needs and facilitate their involvement, the current school-driven paradigm of parent involvement tends to manifest in three ways: to support cultural inequalities and discrimination (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2007) to no longer meet the apparent cultural needs of school communities (Lim, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010); and to limit the opportunities available to build relationships between school staff and CALD parents (Lim, 2012).

Research has tended to identify flaws in school programs, or note difficulties school staff face when working with parents, rather than to identify school practices that could support parent Involvement for CALD families (Kim, 2009). In general, schools have been slow to acknowledge and respond to the needs of culturally-diverse communities (Freebody et al., 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). This may be because CALD parents do not respond as anticipated by schools and may not always attend school functions or, when they do, not have adequate language to participate. It is time for schools to rethink parent Involvement for CALD communities and develop research-based practice that responds to the specific needs of CALD parents.

**Parent involvement defined**

The origins of the concept of parent involvement, as detailed in the narrative of personal, scholarly and professional development (hereafter referred to as the narrative), stem from the introduction of compensatory programs developed for parents in response to the findings of the Equality of Educational Opportunity Report (1966) in the United States and the Plowden Report (1967) in the United Kingdom. These programs were aimed at parents from both low socio-economic status backgrounds and culturally-diverse backgrounds, with the view of guiding them in culturally
acceptable ways to prepare their children for school. Fundamentally, these reports and the programs they generated were attempts to homogenise parenting based on a normative view of white, middle-class parents (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Chrispeels, 1996). Though the beginnings of parent-involvement programs are often overlooked, they are powerful as they form a tacit view of the purpose of parent involvement as a compensatory activity, rather than an opportunity for enrichment and cohesion (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). In general, schools seek parents who support school practices, often at the cost of acknowledging the benefits of broader parenting activities and responsibilities (Lareau, 1987; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). As the origins of parent involvement are found in compensatory programs, the purpose of parent involvement can be perceived as a pursuit to address parental deficiencies for parents from CALD or from low socio-economic status backgrounds. Further, the practice of parent involvement is generally defined by the school, and schools frequently abrogate their responsibility to support parents by shifting the responsibility onto parents for meeting the school’s expectations (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001).

Parent Involvement is a complex concept with little agreement in the literature as to what it is, and how it best operates to support learning (Jeynes, 2005). While in principle the multiplicity of meanings might allow for heterogeneity in understanding the value of parents rather than as a homogeneous group, this has failed to occur. Parent involvement is generally identified by different terms and practices in different contexts and, as such, is complex to define and often limiting (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). Parent involvement has been perceived in many ways: with school improvement (Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 2005; Nakagawa, 2000); with improved student outcomes (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein, 2005; Fan & Chen, 2001; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Turney & Kao, 2009); as an equity and social justice issue (Crozier, 1998, 1999; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007; Reay 2004); and as something that can enhance social and cultural capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009). As the above range of benefits implies, parent involvement has many foci and operates with varied nomenclature and a range of definitions. Indeed, Georgiou (1996) claims that the concept of parent involvement operates with so many meanings that the expression has become meaningless. Lee and Bowen (2006) consider the definitions employed are ineffective as they attempt to simplify what is occurring in any particular school context. Lawson (2003) suggests that parent involvement is bound by contexts that vary with each situation and hence cannot be defined precisely or in isolation. Crozier (2001) supports this view and notes that parent involvement has many meanings that are defined by each context, and that attempts to define it often mask the complexity of what is operating in the dynamic relationship between schools, parents and their children.
The variety of terms currently used to refer to parents’ involvement in their children’s learning also varies. Terms include: parent involvement (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Chrispeels, 1996; Flessa, 2008; Jeynes, 2011; Lim, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006); parent engagement (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004; Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005); parent participation (Henderson, 1987; Cairney & Munsie, 1995); family engagement (Auerbach, 2009, 2011); family-school relationships (Lareau & Horvat, 1999); schools engaging with parents, family and community (Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Mutch & Collins 2012); and family-school partnerships (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Though the nomenclature may change, the practices related to parent involvement in schools tend to remain unchanged.

The range of terms employed can prove confusing as each implies different practices and suggests a variety of parent behaviours and also different relationships between teachers and parents, families and/or the broader school community. Throughout this professional doctorate the term parent involvement is used despite the lack of support for this nomenclature in contemporary literature. As used in this research, the term ‘parent involvement’ refers to a broad range of behaviours, activities and interactions that occur in and between school and home to support children’s learning. This definition includes the actions of parents, guardians and non-biological parents in both environments, school and home, and also defines how the school supports and acknowledges parents’ involvement in both environments (Anfara Jr & Mertens, 2008; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Moreno et al., 2011). I consider this term and definition best addresses the essential parent behaviours that support student learning, particularly for CALD parents in the context investigated in this research. While this definition will be employed, I suggest that parent involvement is more a process than a fixed state, and can be considered a dynamic rather than static entity. This doctoral study broadens the focus of parent involvement to encompass parents, students, the school staff and community members as the involvement of these stakeholders makes a valuable contribution to student learning outcomes and community cohesion. As we live in communities, broadening the definition to include communities makes sense.

While parent involvement may lack a clear definition, certain behaviours and practices are generally expected of parents both at home and at school, and these are typically dictated or anticipated by the school (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Lee & Bowen, 2006). However, these behaviours are not always made explicit, and are often implied (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). This can further marginalise CALD parents as they may not be aware of the expectations schools have of them. The behaviours generally expected of parents include attending meetings and school-based functions, supervising homework and responding to school-initiated communication (Lawson, 2003).
Epstein (1995) provides a richer view of parent involvement that moves beyond definitions to the articulation of a framework and a process based on the three spheres of influence on child development: parents, community and school. From this framework, Epstein documented six types of parent involvement to support the relationship between home and school. These include parenting, communication, supporting school, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. While this framework provides some guidance to schools in establishing parent involvement, it has been criticised by Baquedano-López et al. (2013) as an example of a school-focused process that fails to acknowledge the range of parents’ interests, needs and backgrounds.

The importance and value of parent involvement

Parents’ involvement in their children’s learning has the capacity to impact positively on student academic performance, social behaviour and attendance (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). It has also been suggested that the impact of parent involvement has long-term effects that influence student behaviours beyond the school years (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). The ongoing role of a parent during the school years is to continue to foster learning and support their child to make connections across contexts to maximise the child’s learning capacity and life opportunities (Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 1986, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). There are other incentives for involving parents in schools beyond child development and learning, including greater social cohesion and more equitable communities (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein, 1995).

The importance and value of parent involvement is often compromised by a binary view of involvement, either as a school-initiated or parent-directed practice (Lawson, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001). From a school-driven perspective, parent involvement is generally considered to be a practice that occurs in the school, where parents are required to meet expectations, demonstrate cooperation and enact the behaviours dictated by the school (Lawson, 2003). Parents’ involvement is noted and measured by the school, and their co-operation generally earns acceptance and acknowledgement from the school (Bakker & Denessen, 2007). The flaw with this perspective is that it fails to acknowledge the range and amount of parenting activities that occur in the home, and outside school that also promote learning (Carreon et al., 2005; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Weiss et al., 2009). A parent-initiated perspective of parent involvement generally includes activities that occur in the home with the family or under parent supervision or direction (Chrispeels, 1996; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Lawson, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001). As mentioned in the narrative, this perspective might include discussing schoolwork at home, helping with homework, organising children for school and allocating time to activities that enhances a child’s enjoyment of school (Bloom, 1984; Chrispeels,
1996; Clark, 1983; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Walberg, 1984). These activities generally support school practices. Interestingly, there is limited mention in the literature of parent-initiated or home-based activities, including family excursions, discussions and games that promote learning and might form part of the broad discussion of parent-involvement practices (Carreon et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2001). This may be because parent involvement is generally viewed from a school perspective, or because it is difficult to measure home-based, parent-involvement practices. It has also been suggested that parents may over-report their involvement as a way of demonstrating their interest, and hence these data may inaccurately reflect home-based parent involvement (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Mattingly et al., 2002; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

However, there have been credible reports suggesting that the parent involvement that occurs at home can have a greater impact on student learning than any activities that parents participate in at school (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008). Using the term ‘at-home good parenting’ to describe the positive efforts of parents, Desforges and Abouchaar have argued:

parental involvement in the form of ‘at-home good parenting’ has a significant positive effect on children’s achievement and adjustment even after all other factors shaping attainment have been taken out of the equation. In the primary age range the impact caused by different levels of parental involvement is much bigger than differences associated with variations in the quality of schools. The scale of the impact is evident across all social classes and all ethnic groups. (2003, p. 4)

Harris and Vorhaus (2011) claim that the identification of the positive impact of ‘at-home parenting’ has a significant implication for policy and school-based practice. Yet, the view that school-based parent involvement is superior to family-based parent involvement persists. It is the view of this current doctoral study, supported by Weiss et al. (2009) that learning occurs in many complementary environments and is supported by a range of people. Though the findings regarding the value of parent involvement have at times been inconclusive, there is extensive data confirming that students benefit academically, socially and behaviourally when their parents are involved in their learning (Chavkin & Williams, 1987; Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 1995; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). These benefits hold across different racial groups, though variations have been noted across and within cultural groups, as these groups are not homogeneous and draw on a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, levels of education and family structures (Carreon et al., 2005; Fan, 2001; Lawson, 2003; Jeynes, 2005; Carreon et al., 2005).
An overview of CALD parent involvement in their children’s learning

While less visible in the parent involvement discussion for many years, the experiences of culturally-diverse families are now emerging (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Freebody et al., 2011; Kim, 2009; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Lim, 2012; Lozez et al., 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Nakagawa, 2000; Pena, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). As noted in the narrative, the experience of parents from CALD backgrounds refers explicitly to the experience of adults whose first language is other than English. These diverse cultural groups from a range of ethnic and racial backgrounds have been in their adopted country for different lengths of time and draw on a variety of social and economic resources from their countries of origin. Since parents from CALD backgrounds are often perceived as being less involved in their children’s schooling, uncovering the reasons that inform this perception is critical to understanding the location of CALD parents in the parent involvement debate (Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pena, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

The perceptions of the under involvement of CALD parents at school may be due to parents’ responses to school procedures or a mismatch of expectations between the school and parent (Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pena, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Furthermore, the actions of CALD parents associated with schools may be the result of their background and their own experiences of school (Cardona, et al., 2009). For example parents from CALD backgrounds may consider that school learning is the responsibility of the school and consequently may not visit the school frequently, they may make a few attempts to communicate with teachers, or fail to ensure their visits are noted (Pena, 2000; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Infrequent parent visits can be interpreted by school staff as lack of motivation or disinterest (Nakagawa, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006), which can lead to parents being considered ‘hard to reach’ (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; López, Scribner & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). Yet, parents from CALD backgrounds may demonstrate their interest in their children’s learning and welfare in ways that are not recognised or acknowledged by the school (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001; Mills & Gale, 2010; Nakagawa, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009). CALD parents who are new to a culture, and not familiar with school expectations, may easily feel unwelcome or perceive that they lack the skills or understanding to be at school and so be less willing to visit the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). In addition, school-organised activities are not always considered by CALD parents as opportunities for involvement, as they are generally formal in nature and frequently conducted only in English (Doucet, 2011; Kim, 2009; Mills & Gale, 2010; Weiss & Edwards, 1992; Williams & Sánchez, 2011). Consequently school activities can have a distancing effect and may not present as opportunities for
involvement (Pena, 2000). The above possible range of parental responses to standard school procedures may be perceived as lack of interest from CALD parents. It appears that different expectations are in operation between parents from CALD backgrounds and schools (Denessen, Bakker, & Gierveld, 2007). While this mismatch of expectations is not limited to parents from CALD backgrounds, parents new to a culture may require explicit explanation regarding school expectations.

While parent involvement is supported by policy, it is poorly supported in practice and the complexity of implementing and maintaining parent-teacher relationships is not acknowledged (Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Cairney & Munsie, 1995). Importantly, education systems have failed to keep pace with the growing cultural diversity in schools and the diverse needs of the community (Freebody et al., 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). While adjustment and modification of practice is required of schools in ways that are responsive to their community, the field of education tends to be inflexible, resistant to change and prone to reproduce the status quo (Doucet, 2011; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). This cultural mismatch between the expectations of schools and CALD parents continue as the effectiveness of parent Involvement programs are rarely measured or evaluated, and if they are, the evaluation tends to be informal with no adjustments made to programs (Flessa, 2008). This can lead to further weakness in the operation of parent-involvement programs (Flessa, 2009; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Turney & Kao, 2009). For example, programs may be repeated annually, become ritualised or formulaic and not crafted to the needs of the community (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). When programs fail to meet the needs or interests of the parent community, the response to these poorly considered programs is a decrease in parent attendance. When parents do not attend these events – whose parameters and aims have been dictated by the school – the parents are considered disinterested (Nakagawa, 2000; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). In this way, practices that limit parent involvement continue in schools, with few opportunities explored to improve quality, identify parents’ needs and create effective communication between schools and CALD parents. It can thus be argued that parent involvement is structured by schools in ways that limit involvement, particularly for CALD parents (Doucet, 2011).

The misalignment of expectations between parents and schools is exacerbated by a timetable of activities or opportunities to support parent involvement that is generally planned around the academic year during school hours. Furthermore, these activities may be based on poorly defined goals or the assumption that teachers, as trained professionals, are the best informed regarding student learning (Denessen et al., 2007; Kim, 2009; Mills & Gale, 2010). The goal of these parent activities is generally built on the assumption that parents will attend, and that teachers are in the best position to make decisions regarding student learning without parent input (Mills & Gale, 2010).
While the school creates opportunities for teachers to share their professional knowledge with parents, the opportunities are not reciprocal (Jeynes, 2003; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Indeed teachers may only seek additional input from parents when the need arises due to poor student performance or student misbehaviour. Deviation from this pattern can threaten teachers as they may be concerned about the loss of their professional authority, they may be content to maintain the existing pattern, or they may be unaware that it is possible to change this pattern (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Pena, 2000; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). In addition, these patterns of communication may be adhered to as teachers lack the skills required to communicate with a range of parents, particularly from CALD backgrounds (Kim, 2009).

This perception of the limited involvement of CALD parents may also be a response to the narrow structuring of parent involvement that privileges the white middle classes and largely excludes culturally-diverse communities (Nakagawa, 2000). This conceptualisation of parent involvement as an activity for white, middle-class parents has been broadly challenged as discriminatory, as it reinforces the social reproduction of inequality and limits opportunities for CALD parents to be involved in schools (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lim, 2012; Lopez et al., 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Middle-class and Anglo-Australian parents, generally women, are more likely to feel comfortable at school as they are aware of the school expectations and can generally meet these expectations. On the other hand, CALD parents may be challenged by these tacit demands and, as identified above, not feel welcome at school (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). As a consequence, parents from CALD communities are often placed in a deficit position and considered ‘hard to reach’ (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; López et al, 2001) as they are frequently considered to fail the requests made of them by schools (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). This deficit view ignores the efforts of parents whose parenting is home-focused (Lim, 2012; López et al, 2001). While recognising the discriminatory nature of much of the parent-involvement work, it is nevertheless important to acknowledge the resilience and linguistic and cultural capacities of CALD parents (Cardona et al., 2009).

Yet, studies have also demonstrated that CALD parents actively and visibly participate when schools are welcoming and take responsibility for involving their parent community (Lopez et al., 2001). The involvement of CALD parents is further strengthened when schools develop programs that meet the identified needs of the community and provide appropriate training for teachers to support parent involvement (Jeynes, 2011; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Hindin, 2010; Lopez et al., 2001). This response to the needs of CALD parents suggests a different paradigm of involvement; a paradigm built on community need, communication and recognition of assets rather than on school organisation and habit (Epstein, 2005; Lim, 2012). The challenge is to identify and further investigate how successful
programs for CALD parents have been implemented across different contexts to support their involvement and how this involvement can change the school.

The narrow or deficit view of parent involvement has been perpetuated by a pattern of practice that reflects a socio-political framing of parent involvement as defined by ethnicity, gender and socio-economic status (SES) (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lott, 2002; Mills & Gale, 2002; Reay, 1998). Parents’ cultural background, their gender and socio-economic status all act as filters or structural barriers dictating parent access and movement in schools, as parents’ prior experience dictates their behaviours (Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Reay, 1998). When school structures present as inflexible, parents’ actions may not be aligned with school expectations and hence limit parent access to the school. While it appears that cultural differences are interpreted by schools as ‘parents’ difficulty in meeting school expectations’, it can be challenging for parents to demonstrate their interest in their children’s learning in a different culture where the expectations of parents are unclear and school-initiated practices appear unwelcoming (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). When school practices are not understood by parents they become barriers and can act as a form of structural discrimination distancing parents from the school (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

In addition to noting the impact of parent ethnicity, gender or SES on their involvement, Reay (1998) has identified seven characteristics that impact on relationships between home and school and as such are evidence of the possession of cultural capital which is explored more deeply in Scholarly Paper 2. The characteristics Reay (1998) identifies as impacting on home-school relationships are: material resources, educational qualifications, available time, information about the educational system, social confidence, educational knowledge, and parent attitude (generally the mother) when approaching teaching staff. Possession of these characteristics or resources usually held by middle-class parents suggests compatibility with the school system (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Crozier, 1999, 2001). Reay has noted that the possession and use of these characteristics impacts on the development of relationships between parents and school staff as they encourage parent confidence, facilitate parent presence at the school and may lead to opportunities for equitable discussion. Clearly, it may be difficult for parents to possess all these characteristics, and if they do, they may not be aware of how to employ them in the school setting. It would not be unusual for parents new to a country, or with limited resources and limited language skills, not to possess all of these resources. Without these resources and the behaviours expected by schools, parents can be seen as lacking. However, the conflation of cultural diversity and low socio-economic status that this deficit framing of parent involvement implies is subject to question, as it is school-focused and maintains cultural reproduction (Thomson, 2012). Such cultural reproduction favours white, middle-
class parents, alienates parents from CALD backgrounds and maintains negative perceptions toward CALD parents. This framing also ignores the impact of family values, attitudes and aspirations that are arguably a more powerful influence on student learning than a family’s income, ethnicity or the possession of school-valued capital as noted above (Chrispeels, 1996; Kim, 2006; Mayeske et al., 1973; Reay, 1998; Walberg, 1984).

Where there is a mismatch between school expectations and the expectations of parents from CALD backgrounds, these parents face a complex environment and a challenging task in their attempts to become involved in their children’s school-based education. Just as students from CALD backgrounds require five to seven years to develop language competence in a new culture, and up to ten years if the children are from a refugee backgrounds (Gibson, 2002), their parents may require an apprenticeship of a similar length of time to acquire an understanding of what schools expect of them. During a period of adjustment, parents may have the opportunity to be exposed to school culture, integrate their personal resources and acquire additional resources and confidence (Moll et al., 1992). Schools that evaluate the needs of the community they serve, plan and implement parent programs with these needs in mind, evaluate program effectiveness and respond to the findings may create conditions that support parent involvement for CALD parents (Carreon et al., 2005; Epstein, 1995, 2004, 2007, 2010; Flessa, 2008; Harris & Goodall, 2007; Weiss et al., 2009).

The challenges and barriers to parent involvement

Beyond the mismatch in expectations between schools and parents, there are many challenges or barriers to CALD parents’ efforts to be involved in their children’s learning, that constrain the positive impact of their involvement (Harris, Allen & Goodall, 2008; Lopez et al., 2001; Sheldon, 2003). These challenges or barriers are explored across the literature and can be experienced by many parents, not only parents from CALD backgrounds. The research literature principally focuses on the barriers faced by parents in schools or the challenges for the school in involving CALD parents. Less attention is given to the barriers and obstacles that parents experience from school staff, and these also require investigation in order to develop responsive parent involvement programs (Williams and Sanchez, 2011).

Williams and Sanchez (2011) have suggested that the barriers experienced by parents fall into four categories: lack of time; inadequate access to the school; lack of financial resources; and their lack of awareness of school policies, protocols and expectations. These barriers can operate independently or impact on each other. Parents’ lack of time as a result of work demands, domestic and child care responsibilities may lead to difficulty in attending school events and prevent involvement (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009). Restricted access to the school is often caused by inflexible
school organisation (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003), the inconvenient timing of meetings and the narrow range of activities offered (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). These organisational limitations may be worsened by the absence of feeling welcome when parents do go to the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). Indeed, Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1997) suggest that parents’ perception of their role and their sense of themselves as effective parents who are welcome at the school by both teachers and their children has a significant impact on their involvement. While this may be due to the parents’ perceptions that their role is home-focused, and they may not feel they can provide effective support to their children in the school environment, this situation could be improved with easier access to the school through more flexible organisation (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

The lack of parental resources, including language and limited finances can impact on both parent access to the school and student access to learning materials, leading to reduced opportunities at school (Reay, 1998). Similarly, when parents are not aware of school policies, protocols or expectations, they may feel unsure of how to respond, and this could result in a sense of isolation from both the school and their children’s school-based learning. While schools may present or explain policy or protocols to parents, generally in English, what is actually expected of parents may remain unclear to them (Williams & Sanchez, 2011).

It is interesting to note that the consequences of the above barriers, or limitations, are based on a negative view of parents. Yet, there is little acknowledgement that these limitations arise in response to the school environment (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). These barriers can be a greater limitation for parents from CALD backgrounds, if they lack the confidence or the language skills to operate in a formal school setting, particularly if schools have not catered for their needs (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Reay, 1999, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

In addition to the limitations of school organisation, school-generated barriers that impact on parent involvement include: inadequate teacher skill, and the impact of cultural discrimination. Relationships between teachers and parents can present a significant challenge to parent involvement and the teacher’s role in fostering parent involvement appears to be frequently overlooked in schools (Hindin, 2010; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Teacher-based obstacles may include teachers’ narrow perceptions of parents’ roles as supporters of learning, and poor skills in forming relationships with parents (Kim, 2009; Lawson, 2003). The complexity of relating to a variety of parents may be difficult for teachers whose main focus and area of skill and training is in teaching and curriculum (Kim, 2009; Lawson, 2003). As there is traditionally no pre-service training for teachers in working with parents, nor ongoing professional development in this area, there are few opportunities for teachers to develop awareness of the potential of parent-teacher relationships.
Teachers who lack confidence in working with parents may be further restricted by the short meeting times organised by the school, which are often ‘one-off’ sessions and do not enable the development of a relationship or the building of a rapport. These limitations may be out of a teacher’s control and, as a result, the teacher may feel less responsibility for the effectiveness of their individual communication with parents (Lawson, 2003). The communication between parents and teachers becomes more complex when parents are from CALD backgrounds and have limited English, or are uncomfortable with the formal style of communication used in schools (Kim, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Mills & Gale, 2010). Additionally, teachers’ professional position in the school places them in a position of power and, if they consider parent input into student learning to be of limited value, they may be less welcoming to parents (Kim, 2009; Mills & Gale, 2010). A significant challenge to developing effective parent involvement appears to be the negotiation, development and maintenance of relationships between parents and teachers (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; Cairney & Munsie, 1992).

Cultural discrimination, as noted earlier, can also act as a barrier to CALD parents’ involvement in their children’s learning (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Mills & Gale, 2002, 2007). When CALD parents experience obstacles in accessing the school and information about their children’s learning, school practices can be perceived or experienced as discriminatory.9

Recommendations of ways to reduce the impact of barriers that limit parent involvement, particularly for CALD parents, can be found in the literature. Lopez et al. (2001) identified that schools that take responsibility for involving their parent community develop suitable or bespoke programs. Harris and Goodall (2008) and Sheldon (2003) note that when schools recognise the needs of their parent community and respond to these needs, supportive programs are developed. Schools that attempt to communicate with parents in a range of ways, for example using interpreters, giving personal invitations and encouraging students to deliver notes to their parents, can also reduce barriers (Jeynes, 2011; Lopez et al., 2001; Minke, 2010; Williams & Sanchez, 2011). Barriers can be further reduced by providing parents with additional opportunities to be involved in the school across a variety of times and providing incentives in the form of acknowledgement and hospitality at school functions (Williams & Sanchez, 2011). Significantly, these proposals are focused on school-based parent involvement and further consideration regarding parent involvement beyond the school is required to more effectively address the barriers and blocks that parents may face (Williams & Sanchez, 2011).

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9 The full impact of cultural discrimination on parent involvement will be investigated in Scholarly Paper 2 and Professional Practice Initiative 2.
Interestingly, none of the barriers identified are insurmountable, but to address these barriers requires awareness, organisation and adequate resourcing. The identification of these challenges and barriers provides a powerful insight into the operation of parent involvement programs. These programs are frequently implemented by schools as required by policy, rather than as practice that supports student learning, academic growth and promotes community cohesion. Parent involvement of this type is often something ‘done’ to parents to comply with policy and not a partnership where parents are included as potential partners to enhance student learning and the school culture. In considering the barriers discussed above, it is important to recognise that not all parent involvement may be good for parents, students or the operation of schools, and that it may be unsupportive and counterproductive when done poorly (Epstein et al., 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Harris & Goodall, 2008). For example, programs that are formal in nature or do not present as welcoming to parents may be counterproductive as they distance parents rather than encourage them to be at school.

The barriers and challenges limiting parent involvement appear entrenched, and the barriers faced by CALD parents are greater than those faced by parents who have both command of the dominant language and are more knowledgeable about the culture and expectations of a school. Equally the challenges faced by schools in addressing these barriers are significant, with few programs operating as positive models to adopt. It appears unlikely that the above recommendations to reduce the impact of barriers limiting parent involvement – that include schools taking responsibility for involving parents, identifying parent needs and responding to these specific needs and attempting to communicate effectively (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Jeynes, 2011; Lopez et al., 2001; Minke, 2010; Sheldon, 2003; Williams & Sanchez, 2011) – will provide adequate support for CALD parents unless these strategies are integrated into school planning, monitored and evaluated (Flessa, 2008). A deeper, more comprehensive understanding of the operation and potential of parent involvement is required; one that has the capacity to involve parents and is available to a broad cross section of the community.

Limitations of the research literature

Despite the extensive amount of research in the area of parent involvement over the past forty years, the evidentiary base is weak (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Jeynes, 2005; Mattingly et al., 2002). Research to date has been described as inadequate, poorly designed and characterised by little evaluation (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Research has often been based on anecdotal information, self-reports by parents, patchy information from teachers and studies conducted across a short time frame (Mattingly et al., 2002; Turney & Kao, 2009). There has also been a tendency for research studies to focus on specific age ranges, such as birth to five, middle school or high school, providing only limited information for a broader understanding. Research has also sought to measure the
effectiveness of parent-involvement programs as interventions to modify parent behaviours, not as a broader strategy to support student learning and develop community cohesion (Auerbach 2007, 2009; Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Desimone, 1999). Epstein and colleagues (1995, 2004) claim that current parent-involvement research is inadequate and that cross discipline research that has a broader focus and considers insights across families, communities and schools is required. As Jeynes (2005) notes, the available information on parent involvement is restricted by the quality of the research available to draw on.

Nonetheless, it is surprising that, despite many years of research, there appears to be little explicit information that supports the development of operational relationships between home and school (Kim, 2009). While the benefits of parent involvement are clearly supported, the research has failed to identify which particular parent behaviours and what school practices are most effective in supporting children’s learning and welfare (Kim, 2009; Jeynes, 2005). This may of course be the result of the variety of unclear definitions, the broad and varied range of behaviours included within the terms and the narrow structuring of parent involvement that has developed (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Nakagawa (2000) has suggested that the problem with parent-involvement research is that little of it is experimental and hence has failed to progress the enquiry. There are few examples of research ideas investigated in different settings or new paradigms of practice repeated in different settings to identify possibilities for CALD parents. Research specifically relating to CALD parents has also been compromised by the conflation of cultural diversity with low socio-economic status. The conflation of these two issues has led to confusion as to what is being investigated or measured, which has resulted in an over simplification of diversity and difference.

However, a more pressing limitation across the research area may be that school-based practitioners have failed to refer to research findings and take on recommendations, and have not trialled nor tested the robustness of the findings. Robinson (2007) claims that educational practitioners are generally poor at interpreting research findings in their own settings. Such practitioner-driven investigation and experimentation is required to progress knowledge about and understanding of the complex area of parent involvement. In view of both the gaps in knowledge and the limitations in the research, together with the need for practitioner-based inquiry, it is critical that school practitioners use the evidence that is available, assess the effectiveness of these findings and move the parent-involvement agenda forward. Since there is some confusion about the benefits and challenges of parent involvement, there appears to be a need for further investigation of parent involvement for CALD parents.
The theoretical understanding underpinning the study

There remain a number of issues in the area of parent involvement in schools that have to date been underdeveloped or yet to be explored. These issues can be informed by an analyses of the complex social interactions that take place in schools (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This professional doctorate draws broadly on the work of Bourdieu (1973, 1979, 1984, 2000, 2007) to gain insight and understanding regarding these complex social and cultural relationships and exchanges that operate in schools. Such exchanges occur throughout the school on a daily basis and impact on parent involvement. It is anticipated that a Bourdieusian perspective will provide a lens through which to explore the underdeveloped issues within parent-involvement; issues that may impact on CALD parents and also provide insight regarding potential opportunities to build parent involvement.

Bourdieu’s work is appropriate to this study as it provides the ‘thinking tools’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989) to investigate and develop insights into relational exchanges between people, institutions and power (Auerbach, 2007; Crozier, 1998, 1999, 2001; Grenfell & James, 1998; Reay, 1998, 1999). The ‘thinking tools’ used in this research, Bourdieu’s concepts of ‘habitus’, ‘field’ and ‘capital’ inform the investigation of the social and cultural relationships operating at the research site (in this instance, a school), particularly the operation of power and leadership and the impact of both these social and cultural relationships on a CALD school community. It is anticipated that systematic application of these Bourdieusian concepts will provide insight regarding the impact of the environment on parents’ movement in the school (the field), and their consequent involvement in their children’s school-based learning.

Though Bourdieu’s work (1973, 1979, 1984, 2000, 2007) has been criticised as prescriptive, inflexible and limiting, as his framework locates people on the basis of their possessed capital and habitus (Reay, 1998; Sullivan, 2002; Yang, 2014), it can be shown that Bourdieu’s framework facilitates the analysis of the actions and interactions of all stakeholders in the school field with a view to understanding the impact of power and capital. This is of particular value in light of the fact that schools have been described as inflexible institutions, resistant to change (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003) at the same time as the populations they support are currently undergoing vast cultural changes (Freebody et al., 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). Furthermore, Bourdieu’s work (2000) is of particular relevance to this research as he has explored the experiences of migrant families in new environments, and noted the challenges parents faced supporting their children’s learning as they simultaneously learnt the ‘rules of the game’ of schooling that are required to succeed (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Hence a Bourdieusian framework and research
methodology are suited to the exploration of the perceived limited role of CALD parents in their children’s school-based learning, and the reconceptualisation of this role.\textsuperscript{10}

**A way forward**

While research to date on parent involvement has resulted in limited constructive recommendations to support involvement, particularly for CALD parents (Kim, 2009), this may be due to the lack of specific information on how to implement research findings in complex settings. There are, however, examples or elements of practices that promise to support the development of programs and have the capacity to strengthen parent involvement for CALD families (Auerbach, 2007; Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Flessa, 2008; Jeynes, 2011; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lopez et al., 2001; Williams & Sanchez, 2011).

As previously noted, research on parent involvement falls into two broad groups: studies that focus on specific parent behaviours or point out their non-behaviours (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Hanafin & Lynch, 2002; Jeynes, 2003) and studies focused on schools and what they fail to do (Crozier, 2001, 2003; Reay, 1999, 2004). From this deficit stance, it can be a difficult task to combine available knowledge to develop effective practices based on what is not done (Bryk, 2010).

Initially, I considered Epstein and colleagues’ typology of School, Family and Community Partnerships (1995, 2005, 2007, 2010) as a way forward, as this work has been used extensively in many school contexts through the work of the National Network of Partnership Schools (NNPS). As noted earlier, the NNPS identifies six types of parent involvement together with a process for the development of school practice (1992). The Australian, Family-School Partnerships Framework (2008) which identifies seven types of involvement was also considered. I rejected both of these frameworks as they appeared narrow and too school-centric in their approach and did not appear to reflect the diverse range of needs within the Norton PS community (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Blackmore & Hutchison, 2010; Lawson, 2003). Therefore, I sought studies that specifically considered the experience of CALD parents and schools serving CALD communities, as a possible way forward.

As well as identifying the impact of barriers, a number of elements of practice emerged from studies specifically investigating the experiences of CALD parents in their efforts to be involved in their children’s school-based learning. The practices currently being used are rarely combined to form a comprehensive program. The practices include: schools identifying the purpose of parent involvement (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Williams & Sánchez, 2011, Wong & Hughes, 2006); developing communication protocols between home and school, particularly two-way communication practices (Crozier, 1999, 2003).}

\textsuperscript{10} This concept is explored more fully in Scholarly Paper 2.
2001; Jeynes, 2003; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Reay, 1998); forming relationships, particularly between parents and teachers (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; Carreon et al., 2005; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Kim, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lawson, 2003; Lim, 2012; Lopez et al., 2001; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pena, 2000); developing a welcoming school environment (Crozier and Davies, 2007; Jeynes, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009); offering a range of programs that meet the specific needs of the community (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Williams & Sánchez, 2011, Wong & Hughes, 2006); identifying the role of the classroom teacher (Hindin, 2010; Jeynes, 2011; Wong & Hughes, 2006); improving leadership for parent involvement (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Mills & Gale, 2010; Mutch & Collins, 2013); and developing the school’s collaboration with the broader community to support the parent-involvement goals (Carreon et al., 2005; Crozier, 2001; Kim, 2009; Lopez et al, 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

Significantly, the above eight recommended practices are not unusual school practices, rather they are standard school practices that are adjusted to suit the community the school serves. It appears that schools have attempted to employ a number of these practices generally with positive effect, yet there is no evidence of schools understanding and combining all the above elements to support parent involvement for a CALD community.

**Further considerations**

When the practices identified above are integrated into a school’s procedures, the barriers that prevent or deter CALD parents’ involvement in their children’s school-based learning will likely be reduced. While there are considerations for developing effective parent involvement programs for CALD parents, the research rarely refers to how schools with effective parent-involvement programs have achieved this. In this context, the recommended practices for parent involvement as outlined above can be seen as a list of ‘hopes’ and would require much more than hope; planned systematic implementation is required.

Additional processes were also identified from a broader range of research that addressed the practices used in schools to support parent Involvement. The practices identified are used in many schools and include: parent activities being planned and forming part of the school plan rather than being added later (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Weiss et al., 2009; Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010); and identifying the resourcing needs of programs and allocating a specific budget for programs (Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010). Evaluating parent-involvement programs (Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Flessa, 2008) and seeking input and ideas from the parent community also emerged as useful in shaping suitable practice (Carreon et al., 2005). When these processes and practices are combined
with the effective practices of parent involvement, I anticipate some strong indications of effective practices to support parent involvement for CALD parents will emerge.

Clearly, many of these practices would be effective in supporting parent involvement in any school. The capacity of CALD parents to be involved in schools is influenced by a complex web of variables that include their school experience in their country of origin, the length of time they have been in Australia and the challenges they have faced settling into a new environment (Cardona et al., 2009). Based on these variables, parent-involvement practices that consider ways to support two-way communication, opportunities to develop relationships and offer a suitable range of programs are significant for CALD parent communities.

Such considerations reflect the complexity of parent involvement and the number of elements that need to be integrated to support this practice. Findings drawn from the research literature have the potential to provide rich information to inform schools of a range of specific processes and practices to employ in working with CALD parents. It is possible for schools to support their CALD parents and help them to be involved in their children’s school-based learning by integrating recommendations drawn from research into their parent-involvement program. The above research-based practices also have the potential to address the current gap in knowledge and practice regarding how to support parents from CALD backgrounds to be involved in their children’s learning in ways they choose.

**The next step**

Evidence regarding the potential impact of parent involvement on student learning and welfare, together with the associated social benefits for the community, form a compelling argument for the systematic development and operation of parent involvement for CALD parents in any school. While the ‘how’ of this process currently remains unclear, this doctoral investigation can address the knowledge gap by integrating the findings from research with school-based practice. The strategies identified in this literature review have the potential to guide the development of practices that support parent involvement for CALD parents and lead to the reconceptualisation of parents’ roles as effective, and of schools as supportive and responsive learning environments. In the following section of this portfolio, the key themes and insights derived from the research literature will be used to analyse the effectiveness of the parent involvement programs at Norton PS to support CALD parents’ involvement in their children’s learning.
Professional Practice Initiative 1 (PPI 1)

An exploration of parent involvement for culturally and linguistically diverse parents at Norton PS

This Professional Practice Initiative (PPI) explores the effectiveness of the parent involvement practices and programs employed at Norton PS to support parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds to become involved in their children’s school-based learning. As identified in Scholarly Paper 1, parents from CALD backgrounds may experience barriers and obstacles to their involvement in their children’s learning and in school life in general, making schools a difficult place to visit (Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Reay, 1999, 2004). Additionally, little acknowledgement is given to the array of resources CALD parents provide for their children and bring to the school environment (Moll, Amanti, Neff & Gonzalez, 1992). Instead, parents are perceived as problematic and hard to work with (Chrispeels, 1996; Crozier, 1999, 2001; Kim, 2009; Walberg, 1984). Yet, it has been shown that parent involvement has a positive effect on children’s learning in numerous ways, including improved student behaviour, better attendance and enhanced academic performance (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Weiss, Bouffard, Bridglall, & Gordon, 2009). Parent involvement has also been found to enhance school culture and social cohesion, and is generally employed in high-performing schools (Jensen & Sonnemann, 2014; Mutch & Collins, 2012). Given the potential positive impact of parent involvement on student learning, it is important that schools identify processes and practices that support and acknowledge CALD parents and their involvement in their children’s learning. As previously mentioned, parents from CALD backgrounds have received less attention in international research and measures used to support the relationship between schools and CALD parents have been inadequate as they seem to have overlooked the parents’ needs (Freebody et al., 2011; Kim, 2009; Turney & Kao, 2009). This PPI seeks to specifically identify the programs and practices operating at Norton PS to support parent involvement and determine if there is evidence of the impact of these programs and practices.

Throughout this doctoral research I continue to define parent involvement as the behaviours, activities and interactions that occur in and between school and home by school personnel and parents to support children’s learning at school. While the term ‘parent involvement’ is employed in this research, it is acknowledged that in the research literature, the term generally refers more narrowly to school-defined parent behaviours (at school) (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001). Furthermore, the term typically fails to identify the role of the school and school personnel in supporting and encouraging parents to be involved in their children’s learning.
Importantly, the definition employed throughout this professional doctorate identifies the responsibility of both the school and parents as partners in their children’s learning. Identifying the relationship between the school and parents as a partnership articulates the responsibility of the school staff to engage with CALD parents rather than viewing them in a ‘deficit position’ and therefore problematic.

The work of Bourdieu is helpful in this regard as it explores educational inequalities, how such inequalities are reproduced (cultural reproduction) and how they are maintained (Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Mills & Gale, 2002, 2007, 2010; Reay, 1999, 2004). The Bourdieusian framework is suitable for analysing parent involvement practices at the school as it can support the investigation of the often taken for granted differences that result from variations in class, ethnicity and gender, and the resources families access, which may be influencing parent involvement in the school (Auerbach, 2007; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Reay, 1999, 2004; Webb et al., 2002). In understanding the mechanisms that produce and maintain inequalities, different mechanism can be constructed to rethink relationships between school and CALD parents as relationships of value.

The analysis specifically addresses the following questions.

1. How are the school-based programs and practices responsive to the parent community needs (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006)?

2. How do the school programs provide varied opportunities for parents to be at school (Carreon et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006)?

3. How are the parents’ roles in learning acknowledged by the school (Carreon et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Nakagawa, 2000; Robinson, 2007; Wong & Hughes, 2006)?


With these questions in mind, this PPI will examine the work of Norton PS in involving CALD parents in their children’s school-based learning in four sections. The first considers Norton PS from a research context and provides a rich description of the school and community to gain a comprehensive view of the participants and the operation of the school. The second section details the research process and the methodology used, while the third section documents and analyses parent-involvement programs over a twelve-month period. The final section discusses the findings from the analysis and makes recommendations for future practice.
Viewing Norton PS through a research lens

Exploring the demographics

To meet the needs of the Norton PS parent community, a comprehensive picture of the school was required. While I had a general view of the composition of the community, I needed specific details to identify the needs and measure the effectiveness of school programs. Studies on parent involvement rarely cast a lens across the actions of members of the school community yet, a comprehensive view of all stakeholders was essential to develop practices that support a culturally-diverse community. Not only is this framing respectful to parents, teachers and others supporting parent involvement, it allows for the concept of partnerships to be formulated; partnerships that articulate the diversity and complexity of the Norton PS community.

The geographic context of the school

Norton PS is a government-operated primary school catering for 540 students aged between five and twelve years old. It is located adjacent to a main arterial road in a densely populated part of South Western Sydney. Apart from a railway station, hotel and a small collection of shops, there are few amenities in the neighbourhood. The school has 21 classes for mainstream students and three classes supporting students with various special educational needs. Also significant to the composition of the school is the mixture of faiths and cultures present. According to school records, the population is comprised of 18 faith groups including students with no stated religion.

According to the Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) developed by the Commonwealth government, Norton PS has a low SEIFA (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009). The SEIFA range is 1-50, with a low numeric value indicating high levels of socio-economic disadvantage. Norton PS has a SEIFA rating of 8.64 which means that it falls into the lowest band of socio-economic disadvantage.

Based on the 2008 Census conducted by Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the suburb of Norton has a population of 22,000 residents.11 The breakdown of the 22,000 residents is 2,814 couples with children (53%) and 990 families with one parent (19%). More than half of the Norton student population was born overseas (55.7%) with approximately one third of these arriving in Australia in the last four years. Only 17% of residents speak English exclusively at home, and of those who arrived recently, 25% say that they either do not speak English well or not at all. Of those born in Australia, many of the residents do not speak English as their first language. Norton area has the highest density of children 0–4 years in the Local Government Area (LGA). Forty-two per cent of the children living in the area are under school age.

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11 The 2008 census data was used as this was the information available when this information was initially gathered. The information from the 2012 was reviewed and was consistent with the data collected in 2008.
The main countries of origin of this community are Lebanon, Vietnam, Samoa, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Refugees and humanitarian immigrants, particularly from Burma, have increased significantly in this area over the last five years and, as new residents to the country, they face specific resettlement issues and generally require additional resources (Cardona et al., 2009). Typically, some of their needs include: assistance in understanding and completing forms, seeking additional information regarding access to medical support, translation services, housing and education. Finding affordable and suitable housing is one of the key issues for families in the area, particularly those families new to the country. More than half of the families are renting, predominantly in the private rental market. Of these, 71 per cent of Norton families live in a unit and it is not unusual for families to experience short periods of homelessness, which requires them to seek emergency housing.

Students and their parents

The records kept at Norton PS reflect the data from the ABS. At the time of the study, 96 per cent of the student population had a language background other than English, with 43 languages being spoken at school. The main languages spoken by the Norton PS community are Arabic (36 per cent), Bangali (9 per cent), Vietnamese (9 per cent), Samoan (7 per cent), Urdu (6 per cent) Cook Island Maori (4 per cent) and Indonesian (3 per cent). While the majority of students are born in Australia (72 per cent) the majority of their parents were born overseas. Families generally live in low-cost rental units within the school’s immediate geographical area. After four or five years at Norton PS, it is not unusual for families to move to different areas, either to a government-owned property, their own home in an outer Sydney suburb, or better rental accommodation. The student mobility rate at the school is high and over the past five years mobility has ranged from 18 to 32 per cent annually; there was a 30 per cent student mobility in the last 12 months. Due to this high rate of change, relationships between the school and parents can be short lived. Moreover, this constant movement can limit the opportunity for parents to form connections and networks with each other.

There are a number of significant issues for members of the school population that are not reflected in either ABS data or school records. Families generally maintain strong emotional ties with their country of origin and extended family. They may also have financial or other family responsibilities that require them to return regularly to their former homelands, or have financial responsibility for their family overseas. Overseas travel due to family need or sickness is the main cause of student absenteeism. In some cases members of the school community also have financial responsibility to their church.
In response to the immediate needs of the community, a School as Community Centre (SaCC) was established by the State government in 2002 and is located within the neighbouring primary school. The aim of the SaCC is to support families with young children to develop confidence in their parenting skills, learn more about parenting, find out about and access local services and form networks within their community. Families from Norton PS can access this resource.

Norton PS was also supported by the Smarter Schools National Partnership Program (2011–2013), which provided additional funding to the school due to the socio-economic status of the community. These funds were used to conduct teacher professional learning, parent and community programs, and support program evaluation and monitoring.

Implicit within the demographic of the school population is the suggestion that parents and communities in low SES areas have limited personal resources and limited social and cultural capital, and that they may not be able to adequately support their children’s learning. This conflation between low SES and cultural diversity has been challenged as a family’s values, attitudes and aspirations can have a more powerful impact on student learning than a family’s income or cultural background (Bloom, 1984; Walberg, 1984 in Chrispeels, 1996; Kim, 2009). However, such simplistic representations of CALD families suggest that racial diversity implies a deficit.

**Staffing**

There are a number of groups that form the school staff who all impact on parent involvement. These are the teachers, the leadership team and administration staff.

**Teachers**

Norton PS has a teaching staff of forty. Of these, 28 per cent have ten years or more teaching experience and 43 per cent have been at the school for more than ten years. Seventy per cent of the teachers are permanent members of the school staff. A school-based survey indicated that 55 per cent of staff had no pre-service training in teaching method for teaching students from diverse cultures (CALD) or from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE). Forty per cent of teaching staff did a five-week module based on LBOTE and five per cent did a one-semester teaching method course. Forty-five per cent of the teaching staff originates from a culturally and linguistically diverse background (CALD), including 10 per cent who were born overseas. None of the teachers had pre-service training in working with parents or specifically parents of students from a CALD background.

The main focus of Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) over the past five years has been on developing teacher competency in pedagogy suitable for CALD students. This was in response to the students’ needs, as indicated in the school records and from nationwide compulsory testing known
as the National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN). The areas of language acquisition for students and scaffolding English language learning have been the main focus. School-based professional learning has also focused on developing teacher skills in reading instruction and student acquisition of the technical language used in mathematics.

The leadership team
The leadership team is comprised of the Principal, Deputy Principal, four Assistant Principals and an Assistant Principal: Special Education. Each Assistant Principal is responsible for curriculum, student learning, student and staff welfare, and communication with parents for a part of the school. The Assistant Principal: Special Education is responsible for the Special Education Unit comprised of three classes for students with intellectual disabilities. The Principal and Deputy Principal share responsibility for teaching and learning, welfare, teacher professional learning, communication, parent involvement, administration and finance for the school. The leadership team meet weekly to plan and ensure effective communication and feedback to parents.

Administration staff
As part of the staffing allocation from the NSW Department, Norton PS is assigned a School Administration Manager (SAM) responsible for financial management and budgeting and 2 School Administration Officers (SAO) responsible for all administration tasks including ‘meet and greet’ visitors, enrolments, parent inquiries, first aid and photocopying. Beyond the standard administrative responsibilities of the SAOs, both these staff members are native Arabic speakers. Their language skills greatly facilitate communication with the parent community, as approximately 47 per cent of the community are Arabic speaking. The school is also allocated a General Assistant (GA) responsible for maintenance of the grounds and minor maintenance tasks. The GA, who is also a second language speaker, is empathetic to the parent community and interested in the students. Though not representative of all language groups in the school, this representation of cultural and linguistic diversity creates a link with the community and may promote cohesion (Carreon et al., 2005).

The Community Liaison Officer (CLO) is also part of the administration team whose sole responsibility is working with parents. The CLO, Mrs Dukali (pseudonym), works at Norton PS one half day each week and provides an essential bridge between the parents and the school, attempting to link the cultures of home and school. Mrs Dukali interprets, translates and responds to the needs of parents and follows up specific family needs. A Lebanese-born Arabic speaker, the CLO has been employed in schools for over 20 years and has a comprehensive knowledge of the school system. She is aware of the resources available both within the school system and in the broader community,
has participated in a range of professional learning programs and has developed significant community networks. Although Lebanese born and a fluent speaker of Arabic, the CLO’s Arabic is not ‘formal’ Arabic and she is Christian in a predominantly Muslim school community (68 per cent). She is generally accepted by the school community and has more than the institutional power that may come with her position. Mrs Dukali also has social capital in the community, as she is respectful and in return has earned the respect of the community. While critical to the effective operation of the school, Mrs Dukali also represents the potential tension present in any complex, multicultural environment where there is a mix of cultures, religions and ethnicities. The issues represented by this Community Liaison Officer highlight the lived complexity within a multicultural community where diversity and difference are generally present. In this community diversity is evolving, not a static entity and rather than this difference presenting a tension, it provides an opportunity for the community to build an understanding and acceptance of diversity.

While there is a tendency throughout the literature to present multicultural communities as homogeneous groups with similar needs and understanding, many multicultural communities like Norton PS are diverse, complex and heterogeneous (Epstein, 1995; Reay, 2001; Crozier, 2001; Auerbach, 2007). Interestingly, the CLO has had an extended ‘apprenticeship’ at the school and has acquired respect and cultural capital over time. This example of community complexity is noteworthy – rather than presenting a binary view framed around religious difference – it demonstrates respect, acceptance and possibility within a diverse setting.

**Community workers**

Norton PS has formed a number of partnerships with local agencies in order to cater for students and their families. Community partnerships have been formed with both government and non-government organisations including: Technical and Further Education (TaFE), Good Beginnings, Metro Migrant Resource Centre, Catholic Care, SaCC, Australian College of Physical Education, Western Sydney University, Books in Homes Australia and the Smith Family. The school has also been supported by Community Information Officers located at the local Regional Education office, volunteers and an active Parents and Citizens Group (P&C). The P&C meet monthly and discuss matters of interest to the parent body including curriculum content and assessment, school policy, communication with the school, parent teacher interviews and homework.

Knowledge of the context is key to the development of effective school practices and programs and the above information informs this research.
The research process

When I commenced this professional doctorate, I was of the view that Norton PS was engaged in extensive work to support parents’ involvement in their children’s learning. However, based on my early reading of the parent-involvement research, I could see the flaws and weakness in the school’s practice. The limitations of practice included a lack of accurate demographic information, minimal planning, failure to identify the purpose of parent involvement and insufficient evaluation. Through a systematic review of parent involvement, I verified the accuracy of my view and gained a deeper understanding of what was required to develop quality programs supportive of this diverse and complex community. In the following sections, I discuss the process conducted to gain insights into the school’s processes and practices.

The parent-involvement program was systematically critiqued over a twelve-month period against practices identified as having the capacity to support parent involvement for CALD parents. These were synthesised in Scholarly Paper 1. Eleven practices formed the criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of the school’s current parent involvement. These practices include:

1. identifying the purpose of the parent involvement
2. communication
3. relationships
4. the school environment
5. the range of programs offered
6. the classroom teacher
7. leadership
8. input from the parent community
9. school collaboration with the broader community to support the parent involvement goals
10. the barriers to parent involvement
11. the process considerations of planning, budgeting and evaluation (Auerbach, 2007; Carreon et al., 2005; Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Flessa, 2008; Jeynes, 2011; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lopez et al., 2001; Weiss et al., 2009; Williams & Sanchez, 2011).

Sources of data

As principal, I had access to information and school documents that covered all activities organised for parents over a twelve-month period at Norton PS (July 2011 – June 2012). Information on parent
involvement was collected from twenty Parent Newsletters, thirty-eight Staff Newsletters, four Term Planning documents and the School Plan. The Annual School Report (ASR), a mandatory reporting document, was also analysed as this is the major vehicle used by all government schools to report to their community and includes information regarding student outcomes, financial reporting, and major school events. The ASR also includes contributions from students, staff and parents. Similarly, I drew on the agendas and minutes from both the Parents and Citizens (P&C) monthly meetings and the weekly leadership meetings. These documents provided a comprehensive account of parent activities. Cognisant of the fact that not all members of the parent community were proficient in spoken English and did not read English, I also sought information informally through discussions with parents and from the school administration staff, who often received spontaneous feedback from parents who visited the office. Information collected informally was recorded as diary notes. Weekly parent activities announced at the school assemblies, typically attended by a 100 parents each week, were itemised in a written record. In addition, any evaluative records of parent programs were analysed, noting attendance, and the parent and staff feedback on the effectiveness of activities.

The method

All formal documents, diary notes and records were analysed manually. The focus of the first reading of the documents was to establish the range and number of activities; while the focus of the second reading was to analyse practices against the eleven criteria for effective parent involvement for CALD parents. The third reading identified and considered additional themes from a Bourdieusian perspective. The third reading was conducted at a later time following a deeper investigation of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework.12 While I had sought to use Bourdieu’s concepts in my earlier readings, I realised on reflection, that I had been focused on practice at a superficial level and failed to recognise the value theory could play in identifying strengths and weaknesses in practice and guiding effective, more culturally sensitive school practice.

Ethical considerations

As the principal of the school and the researcher, I occupied a dual position in the study. Furthermore, as the main author of the systematic review, I was aware that the ethical considerations and potential conflict of interest present within the research were significant to the conduct and the outcomes of the study (Earl, 2005). Therefore, I was committed to reporting accurately and not overlooking or understating any flaws in practice identified in the school at the time of the study. While I occupied a privileged position as both principal and researcher, I also had

12 See Scholarly Paper 2.
clarity of purpose: to invite parent involvement and improve student learning outcomes in a school that had been performing under the average in literacy and numeracy for many years, had a high percentage of CALD students and a high turnover of families. I saw that involving parents in their children’s school education was an effective way of improving student learning outcomes. The initial data collection and analysis of parent-involvement activities was one step towards involving parents in their children’s learning in meaningful ways.

Though all documents used in this study were in the public domain, confidentiality was maintained throughout the research and no individual or organisation was identified in the process of collecting, analysing or reporting on the study (Cresswell, 2007). I was committed to avoiding stereotyping should this surface and to use the findings to improve practice at the school (Earl, 2005).

An analysis of parent-involvement programs

The systematic review revealed a broad range of parent programs on offer at Norton PS. During the twelve months of data collection, thirty activities and twenty-eight written communications were available for parents and, of these activities, a number operated for multiple sessions. For example, the Multicultural Playgroup operated 38 times during the analysis period. A total of 276 parent activities were identified. All events identified in the parent newsletters were also noted in the staff newsletters with more details of the event included in the parent newsletters. The focus of the staff newsletters was on student learning and organisation, while the focus of the parent newsletters was to offer invitations, connect home and school and build community. All parent events were included in the Leadership Meeting Agendas with mention of the organisational responsibilities and requirements recorded in the action minutes. Informal records, made up of diary notes recording incidental conversations with parents or comments made by parents to administration staff, generally held more useful information regarding the value of parent-involvement activities. These diary notes were direct comments from parents and often referred to the value of an activity, noting specifically what was of use to them or a request that was made. These informal comments were also useful evaluative material as only five activities were specifically evaluated. This systematic review is, however, limited by the random nature and the general quality of the data that had not been developed specifically for this purpose.

Analysis of the information revealed a pattern of opportunities for parents to be at the school. There was also a pattern of ongoing communication from the school to parents. There were both formal and informal opportunities for parent involvement each week with activities conducted by both the school and community partners. Activities were organised around the school calendar and generally occurred weekly, each term, once per semester or annually. Fortnightly written communication in
the form of a parent newsletter were sent home to parents and oral messages were given to parents at assembly each week. Significantly, there was an increase in the number of activities and also modifications to parent programs during the second half of the data collection period. These additional activities and modifications are a response to my reflections on the academic literature and the understanding of effective parent involvement that I was developing. Adjustments and new programs focused on providing opportunities for parents to be involved in the school or were a response to parent requests, for example, the parents’ interest in introducing a maths computer program for student homework. A record of parent activities follows noting when activities were conducted, the number of times the activity was held and activities introduced during the data collection period.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parent activity</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Multicultural playgroup (38)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English classes (32)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Computer classes (16)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent information during assembly (40)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Gardening group (20)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Messages at assembly (37)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent Newsletter</td>
<td>Fortnightly</td>
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<tr>
<td>P&amp;C meeting (8)</td>
<td>Each term</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cooking classes (3)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent session at Homework Centre (8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent information session (8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent teacher interviews (2)</td>
<td>Each Semester</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student reports (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent excursion</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Meet the Teacher</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Day</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Leapfrogs Kindergarten Orientation program (8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Dads’ Fun Night</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Multicultural Day</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Phone calls to parents</td>
<td>Ongoing, as required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Initiatives</strong> (introduced during the data collection period)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathletics meeting (2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent meeting re NAPLAN</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parent meeting (parent requests)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parenting workshops (8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Presentation Day invitations to parents</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Indonesian playgroup (22)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Two cultures playgroup (8)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Triple P Parenting (Bangla) (6)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Buses to Sports Carnival and Swimming Carnival</td>
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<tr>
<td>Welcome BBQ for K Parents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community picnic</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Community consultation</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Total number of activities** 276

13 This is discussed in detail in Professional Practice Initiative 3.
When these activities were considered against the eleven research-based criteria, useful information regarding the ‘how’ of parent involvement programs emerged. An analysis of the impact of these parent involvement activities follows.

The purpose of parent-involvement activities

Clarification of the purpose of an activity is crucial to the operation of effective parent involvement (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Williams & Sánchez, 2011). The parent-involvement activities did provide a variety of opportunities for parents to be present in the school field that appeared to cater for the specific needs of the community, which suggests the school has developed some understanding of the benefits of parent involvement. However, at the time, the school had not identified the purpose or purposes of parent involvement for the community. Clearly the parent-involvement activities covered a range of purposes, providing varied opportunities including English language classes, occasions for parents to discuss their children’s learning with the classroom teacher; and the celebration of diversity through a multicultural day. Identifying the purpose of parent involvement would support planning and coordination of parent activities, ensure parent needs were catered for and allow them to convey their interest in their children’s learning (Carreon et al., 2005; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). This also provides opportunity for parents to display an informed habitus and acquire cultural capital by being acknowledged or being at the school. Identifying the purpose(s) of parent involvement that is meaningful to the community to acknowledged parents, and creates opportunities for them to be visible in the field.

Communication between school and parents

The communication processes and practices in a school are of high importance and are key to establishing supportive parent-involvement programs, particularly for CALD parents (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Reay, 1998). The range of languages and cultural groups at the Norton PS, together with the high mobility rate, makes communication a key consideration in facilitating parent involvement. While there were many attempts made by the school to communicate with parents during the period of the review, the communication was largely based on a traditional parent-involvement model of paper-based communication (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). There were a few opportunities or avenues for parents to initiate communication in the school setting and only limited chances for two-way communication between parents and teachers as indicated in the data (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Lopez et al., 2001; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Reay, 1999). These included informal conversations between teachers and parents, and between parents after school. There were opportunities for parents to talk with office staff and through phone calls from
teachers. Attempts were also made to establish culturally-appropriate communication for parents that incorporated interpreters or activities conducted in specific community languages.

Though not identified in the analysis, students also play a significant role in the operation of effective two-way communication between school and home (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Seitsinger et al., 2008). Delivering messages from school verbally or ensuring newsletters reach their parents are simple, yet crucial forms of communication in a CALD community. The students are frequently responsible for delivering, translating and explaining communication between school and home, particularly when the messages use school-specific language. Students are also responsible for relaying messages from home to school. When the teachers show value for the communication between home and school, it generally follows that students appreciate the value of the messages and communicate them to their parents (Minke, 2010). The effectiveness of this link provided by students is, however, difficult to measure.\(^{14}\)

Despite the opportunities for communication at the school, planning is required to increase two-way communication between parents and teachers and specifically provide the opportunity for parents to initiate communication (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lopez et al., 2001). From a Bourdieusian perspective, parents initiating communication demonstrates their interest in their children’s school-based learning, allows them to access information and to activate their cultural capital, and to develop and demonstrate habitus, or unconscious behaviour, acceptable in the field (Carreon et al., 2005; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Reay, 2004). Such initiation from parents facilitates the demonstration of some power in their children’s education and also has the capacity to challenge the habitus of teachers and other school staff who may generally control communication (Baquedano-López et al., 2013).

**Opportunities to form relationships**

The formation of relationships also emerged as important to supporting parent involvement for CALD communities, particularly relationships with teachers (Ashton & Cairney, 2001; Carreon et al., 2005; Cairney & Munsie, 1992; Hindin, 2010; Kim, 2009; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lawson, 2003; Lim, 2012; Lopez et al., 2001; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pena, 2000). The school demographics over the last four years indicate that 33 per cent of the school population have been in the country for no more than four years and the average annual turnover of students is 19 per cent. Consequently, forming relationships is important to avoid isolation and promote cohesion (Auerbach, 2007). The activities operating at Norton PS provide a number of opportunities for parents to form relationships

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\(^{14}\) Students’ role in facilitating communication will be further investigated in Professional Practice Initiative 2.
facilitated by culturally-specific activities, English classes for parents and the provision of a community room for parents to spend time together.

As noted earlier, informal opportunities for parent involvement were not identified through the analysis, yet the informal opportunities and spaces for parent involvement and communication were available. The front office, the playground, after assemblies and when dropping off or collecting students all provide opportunities to create and maintain relationships (Carreon et al., 2005; Lawson, 2003). These are, however, difficult to measure or evaluate due to their casual nature.

When the opportunities to form relationship in this field are considered, beyond creating connections, the activities available also provide some opportunity for parents to be present at the school, demonstrate their interest in their children’s learning and also display their competence as parents in the school environment (Bourdieu, 1977; Carreon et al., 2005; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). While forming relationships is not an articulated purpose of the parent-involvement activities at this time, there are opportunities for parents to display and further develop their cultural and social capital, in particular when parents have the opportunity to relate with others from the same culture or those who share an interest, for example working in the community garden at school or cooking together. Clearly not all parents access such opportunities and the school needs to consider the benefits of forming relationships when planning parent-involvement activities as relationships provide occasions for parents to demonstrate and share both their capital and information.

The school environment

The school environment or culture also emerged as significant to the effectiveness of parent involvement for CALD parents (Mutch & Collins, 2012). Operation of a positive or welcoming school environment was reflected in the school’s efforts to establish extensive suitable parent activities. The operation of programs with external partners, the availability of front office staff to welcome parents and the provision of language-specific activities also suggests a welcoming environment (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Jeynes, 2011; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009). However, parent access to the school was restricted by set meeting times and the inadequate provision of childcare (Carreon et al., 2005; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Nakagawa, 2000; Wong & Hughes, 2006). The impact of the school environment on parent involvement will be explored more fully through the field analysis conducted in the next section, Scholarly Paper 2.

A range of programs and activities

The development of programs that meet the specific cultural community needs a mix of different activities is also important (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Lopez et
al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Williams & Sánchez, 2011, Wong & Hughes, 2006). It is clear from the demographic information that the families in this community come from varied cultural backgrounds each with their own needs, strengths and assets, and bring with them their own social and cultural capital and habitus (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Cardona et al., 2009). While there is often a tendency for schools to operate parent programs that are formulaic or ritualised and general in nature, there is some evidence that the activities operating at Norton PS are tailored to meet a number of the parent community needs and therefore respond to a number of the parents’ needs and interests (Doucet, 2011; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Culturally-appropriate programs at the school include: Leapfrogs Kindergarten Orientation program; Multicultural Playgroup; Indonesian Playgroup; Triple P Parenting (Bangla); Gardening Group; Parent English classes; curriculum information sessions, parent excursions and P&C meetings.

It appears that the scope of programs caters for parents from different cultural backgrounds. This shows respect for parents’ embodied capital and also provides opportunities for parents to accumulate additional capital by being present in the field (Bourdieu, 1973; Jeynes, 2011; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). The importance of English classes for parents cannot be underestimated. They provide opportunities for parents to acquire additional skills and further shore up their capital. Yet these programs may not cater for the needs of all parents. Of consideration in planning a variety of activities is the availability of providers or community partners to support programs, the cost involved, the availability of space and the provision of interpreters. Given the complexity of addressing these considerations, it is important to prioritise the needs of parents so that activities are fully resourced and meet community needs. Despite the school’s positive intentions and efforts, it may be impossible for a school to genuinely cater for the needs of all parents due to staffing arrangements, the range of staff skills, and the resources required to do this. However, the identification of parent needs and the clarification of the purpose of parent involvement would assist the school and go a long way to achieving this goal.

The role of the classroom teacher in parent involvement

The role of the classroom teacher consistently emerged in the literature as critical to the effectiveness of parent involvement. In fact, Hindin (2010) argues that teachers have the greatest impact on parent involvement though this role is often ignored. Based on the analysis of data at Norton PS, teachers did not emerge as having a great impact on parent involvement. At the time of the analysis, teachers generally did not have responsibility for organising parent-involvement programs. However, teachers are in a position to form relationships with parents, make them feel welcome at the school and thus facilitate parent involvement through frequent or daily contact (Hindin, 2010; Jeynes, 2011). Similarly, teachers are also in the position to acknowledge parents’
work and their cultural capital. While the systematic review may not be sensitive to the amount of contact or the relationships teachers have with parents, this information highlights another weakness in school practice as there is currently no teacher professional learning on parent involvement for teachers.15

The role of leadership in parent involvement

Leadership is essential to the conceptualisation and effective implementation of parent involvement, particularly in schools with significant CALD populations (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Griffith, 2000; Mutch & Collins, 2013). Leadership for parent involvement requires an understanding that student learning occurs across different compatible environments and that home and school learning can be complementary rather than student learning only being privileged in the school environment (Robinson, 2007; Weiss et al., 2009). This is an important consideration as effective parenting occurs predominantly in the home and may not be conspicuous (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003).

Information on the impact of leadership on parent involvement is implied through the review, though not directly identified. Clearly, leadership has contributed to the range and number of programs operating at the school and to the elimination or minimisation of barriers to parent involvement. The level of participation from partner organisations beyond the school also suggests negotiation and planning between partner organisations and the school leadership.

It is clear that leadership has a significant role in supporting parent involvement through the implementation of programs that have the capacity to promote and acknowledge parents’ embodied capital and habitus. Strong leadership also provides opportunities for parents to further acquire and activate their capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Lingard & Christie, 2003). When leaders are welcoming and develop relationships with parents, communication may occur with some ease rather than being predicated on the principal’s position of power in the school (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). As the field is a site of struggle for resources, the work of a principal includes cognisance of this struggle and the ability to use available resources effectively (Thomson, 2012). At Norton PS, directing resources into parent involvement is a leadership choice. It is clear that the area of leadership requires greater exploration and understanding to identify the skills, knowledge and understanding that are most effective to support parent involvement.16

Input from the parent community

It is paramount that the school collects information from their parent community. This not only acknowledges parents’ needs and their strengths but also provides the opportunity to consider the

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15 This issue will be further explored in Professional Practice Initiative 3.
16 The role and impact of leadership for parent involvement will be examined in Scholarly Paper 3 and Professional Practice Initiative 3.
parents’ skills that they can bring to the field. This input is critical to shaping an effective or bespoke program that will meet the community needs (Carreon et al., 2005; Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Flessa, 2008; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lopez et al., 2001; Weiss et al., 2009). The data suggest there were limited ways for parents to give input into programs at the beginning of the period of analysis. Parents could discuss matters and make suggestions through the Parents and Citizens meetings or by making suggestions to the staff in the front office and to individual teachers. Parents would also volunteer information to the principal and comment on activities they enjoyed. Generally decisions on the content of parent-involvement activities were based on school timetable and programs offered by community partners. This changed during the period of analysis and a community consultation was conducted. The parents gave explicit feedback and identified the activities that they considered were effective, recommended changes and also made suggestions for activities that would meet their needs. The consultation also served to acknowledge the work of the partners, was empowering to the community and led to changes in the type and range of programs. The changes are discussed below.

**Collaboration with the broader community**

Support from community partners enhances the range and options for parent-involvement programs (Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Lopez et al., 2001; Mutch & Collins, 2012). The analysis of programs operating in the school shows that connections with partner organisations led to additional programs, resources and opportunities for parents that may not have existed otherwise. Partnerships can lead to stronger links with the community and also ensure the needs of the parent community are met more effectively. Such partnerships are possible when the needs of both organisations are met through the partnership. During the period of analysis, 45 per cent of the activities offered were supported by partner organisations. The school could not operate these programs without this external support. From the data collected, there was no indication of the amount of time required to establish and maintain these partnerships.

Partner organisations offer or suggest activities at different times of the year subject to the availability of staff, funding and other resources. Parent activities, including the Indonesian playgroup, English classes and parenting classes ideally suited to the needs of our parent community cannot always be planned ahead – a situation that presents a challenge to the on-going organisation of the school. Activities supported by community partners create additional opportunities for parents to be in the field and acquire and display capital (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Lingard & Christie, 2003).
Barriers and challenges to effective parent involvement programs

As identified in the introductory narrative there are a range of barriers and challenges to parent involvement in the school field that receive extensive attention in the parent-involvement literature (Carreon et al., 2005; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Reay, 1999, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009). The term barrier is used to refer to the blocks parents face in navigating a new school system. Challenges refer to the obstacles schools are required to address in supporting parents’ involvement in their children’s learning. Some barriers relate to parent experience or their perception of either their own suitability or perceptions of the school as an unwelcoming place (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Williams & Sánchez, 2011). These issues may be challenging for schools to address. A number of challenges to parent involvement were identified in the analysis and that need to be addressed, specifically the challenge to identify suitable processes that will enhance parent involvement. Some challenges are structural, such as the timing and location of meetings, which the school can address at an organisational level. Others require understanding the impact of poor practice that therefore requires greater thought and organisation. This review indicates that the school has addressed a number of the organisational challenges and potential blocks to parent involvement by being welcoming and providing interpreters, childcare and accessible spaces in the school. Consequently, Norton PS may present as a potentially inviting space for parents to occupy, where adjustments have been made to the environment and it is possible to display and acquire cultural and social capital (Jeynes, 2003). However, some challenges are more difficult to address such as the timing of meetings, parent access to teachers at various times during the day or conveying how the school system works to new parents. Currently the school has limited resources and lacks the flexibility to have teachers off class to talk to parents at any time. This is a challenge that needs to be discussed at a community level where a school-based solution can be developed.

The review also suggests that the parent-involvement program is further weakened by the lack of planning, as indicated earlier (Weiss et al., 2009; Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010). While 30 parent events were identified during the 12-month period, only 39 per cent of these events were specifically planned and of these, only a five (9 per cent) were evaluated as they were part of the School Plan and have a stated parent focus and include a budget. Generally, school planning is the responsibility of the staff, and hence there may be a sense that parent involvement is ‘done’ to parents, rather than parents being included as active participants and decision makers (Fishel & Ramirez, 2005; Sheldon, 2003).

Although parents are invited into the school and the school considers it is meeting their needs, these invitations may still be perceived by parents as limited opportunities that are school-focused (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Williams & Sánchez, 2011). Parents may feel isolated when programs
are too formal or only in English. Increased occasions for parents to develop and activate capital useful in the field could be made through their participation in planning and their contributions to decision making (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Carreon et al., 2005; Horvat & Lareau, 1999). Having direct parent input would acknowledge parents’ roles and would lead to activities that parents are interested in rather than activities that may distance them (Kim, 2009; Mills & Gale, 2010; Pena, 2000; Weiss & Edwards, 1992).

While the community-consultation process appears an effective way to identify parents’ needs, it is a strategy the school may need to explore further. This first consultation was attended by sixty-two people including parents and community partners. The discussion was rich and informative with acknowledgement of the efforts made by the school and a range of suggestions of how the current activities could be extended, improved and modified. The ideas expressed by the parents attending may represent the views of many, however, these ideas do not represent the entire community. There is also a strong ‘voice of the silent’ (Lawson, 2003) and as a result, the needs and ideas of all are not heard. According to Lawson (2003) what is not heard or not said, ‘the silence’, is an important element in the parent-involvement debate. The school would now benefit from identifying additional ways of collecting information from a larger section of the parent body or a more representative group in order to identify and attempt to meet the needs of the parent community.

Parent activities that meet parents’ specific needs create opportunities for them to become knowledgeable about the school and school practices and to further build their capital at the school (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Lingard & Christie, 2003). They also help parents to develop language, vocabulary and behaviours that are valued in this field (Bourdieu, 1977). Such programs also provide the opportunity for parents to develop capital and habitus compatible in this field and to build confidence in their capacity to be in this field rather than operate in a limited role (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Furthermore, direct responses to parents’ needs and requests influence the field and place the parents in the role of initiating action and informing the field (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Lingard & Christie, 2003).

The parent-involvement program was further weakened by the limited understanding of the benefits of parent involvement held by teachers and the narrow role they give to parents as a result. Teachers have a significant opportunity to inform parents of school practices, share information about students’ performance and connect home and school in both formal and informal ways. Teachers also have the opportunity during informal communications to make conspicuous parent resources and parents’ knowledge of their children’s learning (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). As
previously identified, 45 per cent of teachers are from non-English speaking backgrounds and may be sensitive to the experiences of parents at Norton PS. Furthermore, as some of these teachers are also competent speakers of community languages, they are capable of communicating without the support of interpreters. Equally, when teachers do not take up these opportunities, or lack the skills to do so, parents may feel less welcome at the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

**Process considerations**

Schools that consider input from their community – that value and use the information garnered from the community – tend to produce effective parent-involvement programs (Carreon et al., 2005; Epstein, 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010; Flessa, 2008; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Weiss et al., 2009). The systematic review of operating programs revealed only five parent activities were planned, had a budget allocation, and were evaluated annually. These were the Multicultural Playgroup, Leapfrogs’ Kindergarten Orientation program, parent English and computer classes and the Dads’ Fun night. All these programs operated with the support of community organisations and were well attended. Modifications were made to these programs in response to the evaluations. Other parent activities were planned each term (quarterly), such as parent-teacher interviews. There was no evidence of further program evaluation during the review. Planning and organisation of parent involvement reflects an understanding of the benefits of this practice for CALD parents which was lacking from the school programs (Carreon et al., 2005; Weiss et al., 2009).

**Discussion**

The focus of the systematic review was to identify the range of activities that support parent involvement at Norton PS and to critically reflect on the effectiveness of the programs for this CALD parent community. The review of parent involvement at the school led to the identification of 281 activities to support parents’ involvement in their children’s learning. Consideration of these activities against the eleven criteria indicated that, while the school appeared to be doing extensive work to involve the parents, there were flaws and weaknesses that reduced the effectiveness of the activities. Clearly some matters are hard to identify or measure, and a number of issues were not identified through the analysis, including the degree of parents’ involvement and the different types of involvement that parents were demonstrating, particularly home-based parenting. It also emerged that the school lacks a method of identifying and acknowledging the needs of parents and suitable teacher professional development to ensure teachers are aware of the significance of parent involvement and the potential of parents’ roles in the school.
Though the analysis proved to be a ‘blunt instrument’ in providing depth of information on parent involvement, a number of insights were identified regarding the four specific areas of inquiry. These areas of enquiry were:

1. How are the school-based programs and practices responsive to the parent community needs?
2. How do the school programs provide varied opportunities for parents to be at school?
3. How are the parents’ roles in learning acknowledged by the school?
4. Are there barriers and limitations to parent involvement in the programs on offer at the school?

In answering the first question regarding the suitability of the program to meet the parent community needs, it appears that while the school was attempting to be responsive to the specific needs of the parent community, because the parents’ needs were not explicitly identified, it is difficult to measure the effectiveness of the program. Lack of formal evaluation further reduced the responsiveness of the programs. In answering the second question concerning the range of opportunities for parents to be at the school, the analysis suggests that the activities provided a range of both formal and informal opportunities for parents to be at the school, yet the timing of activities and the heavy reliance on formal communication limited parent attendance. The third area of inquiry focused on the school’s capacity to acknowledge parents’ role in learning. The acknowledgement of parents’ roles was generally poorly done as the school is yet to identify the purpose of parent involvement and the roles of all stakeholders in supporting parents’. While regular messages were identified regarding the importance of the parents’ role in learning, there were only limited opportunities to do this. Document analysis, however, may lack the sensitivity to detect this practice, as acknowledgement of parents’ work may occur subtly through brief interactions between teachers and parents. The fourth and final area of inquiry of this review sought to identify if there were barriers to parents’ involvement and challenges presented by the school in involving parents. It is clear from the review of parent-involvement activities that considerations have been made to reduce the impact of both barriers and challenges in the school. As noted, these include adjusting the school environment, the introduction of a community consultation and Dads’ Fun Night as ways of increasing opportunities for parents’ visible involvement. Dads’ Fun Night was introduced as fathers are less likely to be visibly involved in their children’s school learning. This is generally because fathers may be working and also as communicating with the school is often considered a mothers’ responsibility. By addressing and attempting to minimise the barriers and challenges impacting on parent involvement, it may be possible to reduce the limitations parents face. Yet barriers and challenges still exist.
A way forward

The purpose of this systematic review was to critique practice with the intention of identifying more effective ways of catering for parents to be involved in their children’s formal education. I commenced the review with the idea that the school was engaged in extensive work to support parents to become more involved. I was also aware that the parent-involvement program was flawed. Through engaging in scholarly reading and conducting the review, I have developed a deeper and more complex view of parent involvement and have become aware of the barriers to parents and the complexities that the school needs to address. Significant knowledge was gained from the analysis of the data regarding the ‘why’ of parent involvement. In addition to identifying weaknesses in the parent-involvement program, a range of processes and practices were identified that suggest the ‘how’ of parent involvement. These processes were used to inform practice and a number of changes in practice have been made subsequently. The changes identified during the second half of the year included the inclusion of parents’ input into the content of the parent-involvement program, identifying additional community partners and increasing the range and number of activities. These new activities were generally culturally appropriate such as the Two Cultures playgroup that acknowledges the complexity of bridging cultures and Triple P Parenting in Bangla.

Four areas have been identified through this systematic review that require further investigation to support parent involvement in a multicultural community, allowing parents to support their children’s learning in meaningful ways and move from a deficit position in the field. These are:

1. clarifying the purpose of parent involvement
2. developing an understanding of cultural reproduction and discrimination
3. exploring leadership practice for parent involvement for a CALD community
4. exploring teachers’ role in facilitating parent involvement.

The first three issues will be fully explored throughout this professional doctorate while the fourth, the role of the teachers, will be integrated into the other elements of the research. The clarification of the purpose of parent involvement is required as there are different views amongst stakeholders in the school community. Clearly, a deeper understanding of cultural reproduction is necessary to understand the impact of both daily social interaction and school practices on parent involvement. The impact of cultural reproduction will be explored in Scholarly Paper 2, which follows, by considering the operation of parent involvement at the school from a Bourdieusian theoretical position.

17 This issue will be explored in Professional Practice Initiative 2.
As leadership has the greatest potential to impact on the effectiveness of parent involvement for CALD communities, the exploration of culturally appropriate leadership practices for parent involvement in a CALD community is needed, (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Mills & Gale, 2010; Mutch & Collins, 2013). The area of leadership of parent involvement for a CALD community is the focus of Scholarly Paper 3 and Professional Practice Initiative 3.

This analysis of parent-involvement programs offers a systematic way to audit the school’s practices and processes. These findings have the potential to inform effective school-based practices and protocols at Norton PS. The above information contributes to addressing the gap in the research on CALD parents’ involvement in their children’s learning and shapes the ‘how’ of effective practices.
Scholarly Paper 2 (SP 2)

The impact of Bourdieusian theory on parent involvement for culturally and linguistically diverse parents

While the value of parent involvement in children’s learning is acknowledged (Fan & Chen, 2001; Mattingly, Prislin, McKenzie, Rodriguez, & Kayzar, 2002), the place of parents from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds is often invisible or marginalised (Freebody, Freebody & Maney, 2011). As noted throughout this work, when culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) parents are included in parent-involvement research, they are often presented in a deficit position and considered ‘hard to reach’, disinterested or unable to participate in their children’s school learning (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Flessa, 2008; López, Scribner, & Mahitivanichcha, 2001). This scholarly paper explores the complex mechanisms of cultural reproduction and discrimination in schools by developing a deeper understanding of how cultural reproduction operates to adversely impact upon and limit the location and role of CALD parents in the field of education (Webb, Schirato, & Danaher, 2002). Employing Bourdieu’s theoretical framework and particularly his concepts of habitus, capital and field facilitates this exploration (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). The use of a Bourdieusian three-phase field analysis allows an exploration of the levels of power operating in the school field and the identification of forms of social reproduction that may lead to and maintain discrimination (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

I draw on the work of Bourdieu as his theory creates a framework to support an understanding of every day social interactions that help develop clearer insight into the operation of cultural reproduction at Norton PS. This theoretical approach also supports the development of insights across multiple elements of education and educational settings including parent involvement, leadership and school culture, all of which are relevant to this study. It enables the reconceptualisation of parent involvement for a CALD school community. In schools where the parent group is largely made up of CALD parents, these parents frequently experience the negative impact of cultural reproduction for they possess less capital (power) than other parents and far less capital than that held by the school teachers, leadership team and the principal (Reay, 2004; Thomson, 2012). Furthermore, Bourdieu’s theory of practice and his ‘thinking tools’ provides a lens through which to view and promote a deeper understanding of the interactions of all stakeholders in the school field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989). Such an understanding can help clarify the impact of interactions that occur daily, the effects on student learning and the location of parents in the field. Based on these new insights, it may be possible to both reconceptualise parents’ roles in their
children’s school-based learning in a different light and develop school-based practices that may support new and varied roles for parents beyond that of ‘deficit’ position.

Schools have the capacity to promote and support equity and opportunity through learning, or have the opposite effect of reinforcing social inequality and restrict and entrap learners in a limiting position (Bourdieu, 1977; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2002, 2007; Reay, 1998, 2004; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). When the gap between the school’s capital and a family’s capital is too great or too different, or is perceived as too great or too different, this difference can impact negatively on a student’s ability to learn and be engaged as well as impacting on parents’ access to the field (Reay, 2004; Thomson, 2012). In this paper I explore the ways that cultural capital is valued and the extent to which schools have the capacity to redress the gap – the difference – between the cultural capital of the school and of families. This can be done through acknowledging the parents’ possession of capital and noting the impact of this capital on parents’ access to the field and modifying parent-involvement practices in culturally-responsive ways (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2002, 2007, 2010).

Despite the extensive research into parent involvement in schools, there remains a number of issues that to date have been underdeveloped (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This may be due to the inflexible nature of the education field that is constantly recreating itself in the same footprint (Bourdieu, 2007; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). To understand the resistance to change in the education field, and the accompanying cultural reproduction of the status quo, it is valuable to analyse the field and note interactions that occur (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). It is also valuable to make visible the explicit and implicit rules that guide the interactions together with the impact of power, habitus and capital on the field. An exploration of the impact of the doxa – the accepted thinking on the functioning and structures in the field – is also useful as it offers further insights into the specific expectations of this field (Deer, 2012). These issues are explored throughout this paper in order to reconceptualise parents’ position in the field.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, this paper is organised into four sections. First, I discuss Bourdieu’s theoretical perspectives clarifying the key concepts of habitus, capital and field and the interrelationship that operates between them. The second section is an application of Bourdieusian-based methodology, clarifying the use of Bourdieu’s framework across this work to investigate the operation and impact of social reproduction on parent involvement in the research setting. The third section explores the nexus of Bourdieusian theory and practice, noting the operation of cultural reproduction that positions and maintains CALD parents in a deficit location in the school field. The fourth and final section explores the conditions of change as suggested by Yang...
The specific Bourdieusian ‘thinking tools’ employed to investigate and understand the everyday interactions, and which are the focus of this study, are ‘habitus’, ‘capital’ and ‘field’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989). These concepts work both separately and together to inform the investigation of day-to-day school interactions, including occurrences that might otherwise be overlooked, played down or dismissed (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Thomson, 2012). The use of these concepts and the language of these concepts make it possible to observe, deconstruct and explain the interactions and relationships occurring in the school in a non-judgemental way. Employing a non-judgemental position is significant in working with the CALD community who are often new to the Australian school environment and can be judged for not knowing the ‘rules of the game’ of schooling (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). While Bourdieu’s work has been criticised as being overly deterministic, that is, presenting an overly rigid way of perceiving the roles of different groups within the community, these theoretical underpinnings enable an understanding of
interactions that occur in schools as well as insights regarding parents’ attempts to be involved in their children’s school-based learning (Reay, 1998; Sullivan, 2002; Yang, 2014). As such, the Bourdieusian framework offers the possibility for reflection and action, reflexivity and praxis. Bourdieu’s work also supports an understanding of the activation of capital and the complexity of change in the school field noting the impact of hysteresis – the challenge of adapting and responding to a new situation (Bourdieu, 2007; Hardy, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007; Yang, 2014). In this way Bourdieu explains how change may occur over time and offers ways to begin to examine and action change rather than limiting the options of individuals.

Of particular value to this work is that Bourdieu (2000) specifically considers the experiences of migrant families. He describes the efforts of migrant parents directing resources into the aspirations for their children as ‘generally doomed’, as their efforts are made on the assumption that social rules are consistent (Bourdieu, 2000). He describes these actions as ‘gambling for capital’ (Bourdieu, 2000, p. 119), as social games are not fair, and it is not possible to predict an outcome. Social capital valued by the field is required to attract social capital from the field. An exploration of the concepts of habitus, capital and field – and the inter-relationship between them – follows. This extends the brief discussion of these concepts initially introduced in PPI 1.

Habitus

Habitus is one’s disposition; the habitual unconscious behaviour which, Bourdieu suggests, is generally developed in the family environment. Habitus is socially constructed in response to the interactions that occur in the field of operation and is malleable and responsive to these interactions (Maton, 2012). Bourdieu (1977) claims that one’s habitus is best understood in light of the dominant culture. According to Bourdieu (2007), habitus is the least understood of his concepts due to the range of interpretations other scholars have drawn from his work. Habitus, a concept originally used by Aristotle, has many interpretations that have been used by a number of prominent scholars including Hegel, Husserl, Elster, Weber, Durkheim and Mauss (Bourdieu, 2007, p. 12). Based on his research observations and data, Bourdieu significantly rethought the notion of habitus to allow him to describe everyday contemporary social experience. An understanding of this concept is critical to the understanding of his theoretical framework, yet is frequently omitted from the work of many researchers (Gaddis, 2013).

An individual’s habitus is built within the family of origin and is generally further developed in the school environment (Bourdieu, 1977). Habitus allows individuals to unconsciously anticipate and respond to the demands of their environment based on their familiarity with the conditions that operate around them (Bourdieu, 2007). Further, one’s habitus makes it possible to anticipate the
future without constantly planning, where one responds at a practical level to the social conditions in operation rather than being ‘rule bound’ (Bourdieu, 2007; Maton, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010). Importantly, while acquired over time in response to social conditions, one’s habitus has the generative capacity to react, improvise and invent responses to the varied demands of the field to shape future behaviours (Bourdieu, 2007).

It is useful to view habitus on two levels. As Maton (2012) suggests, habitus functions as a temporary construct and also as an enabler for research (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). This dual view is of particular value to this study as it allows the specific identification and naming of the behaviour of individuals and invites understanding of multiple interactions from different players in the field without judgement (Maton, 2012). As a research tool, habitus simultaneously draws attention to significant behaviours and offers a way of thinking about them (Maton, 2012, p. 60). Rather than seeing behaviour from a narrow dichotomous view of ‘accepted or not accepted behaviour’ the term, habitus, provides the mechanism to acknowledge many dispositions and behaviours so that all may be ‘accepted’ (Bourdieu, 2007). Habitus does not operate alone; it operates in response to the field, initially to the field of development, generally the home, and then in an ongoing manner in other environments. Habitus describes the way individuals respond to their location, their actions, feelings, thinking and being (Maton, 2012). However, habitus cannot be considered in isolation, as it is intimately tied to the function of capital and field.

**Capital**

While the term ‘capital’ generally refers to economic matters (Moore, 2012), Bourdieu uses it in a broader sense. He refers to capital as power, a source of exchange that is present in four principal categories: economic capital, social capital, cultural capital and symbolic capital (Jenkins, 2007). Economic capital describes financial exchange which has an established value (Moore, 2012). Social capital refers to social networks, relations, religion and kinship connections (Thomson, 2012). Symbolic capital operates in a range of forms including emotional (Reay, 1998), linguistic (Reay, 2004), scientific (Bourdieu, 2004, 2001) and educational (Cardona et al., 2009). These forms of capital vary according to the field in which they operate. The preceding forms of symbolic capital will not be drawn upon in this study as the major focus of this research is on the impact of cultural capital on interactions in the field. The role of social capital will be considered briefly because the development of social networks in the school field is important to understand migrants’ experiences. Cultural capital, acquired over time, is generally demonstrated through language, vocabulary, social customs, knowledge and behaviours, which according to Bourdieu, (1977) all signify and reproduce social class and imply accomplishment.
Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1986), plays a crucial role in the reproduction of dominant social relations and structures. Cultural capital operates in three guises: *objectified, embodied and institutionalised* (Bourdieu, 1984 p. 47, italics in original). Objectified capital refers to books, galleries and cultural goods. Embodied capital refers to language, body language, intonation, stance and life choices, the possession of which makes it possible for agents to decipher cultural codes (Yang, 2014). Institutionalised capital refers to educational qualifications and experience in educational institutions providing the opportunity to acquire an understanding of the rules of the game of education (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

However, it is cultural capital that is significant when looking into CALD school communities and how to involve parents more fully. Similar to economic capital, cultural capital is the basis of exchange and operates in the same manner as economic capital in that it buys positioning in the field (Grenfell, 2012). Cultural capital is a form of asset that brings either social and cultural advantage or disadvantage. Bourdieu noted that while the purpose and value of economic capital is transparent, the exchange rate or value of cultural capital may be difficult to assess as it is quantified by the field in which it operates and by the agents who activate and display capital; it is, therefore, subject to variation (Moore, 2012).

Cultural capital is systematically acquired overtime, is capable of conferring power, can be transferred to different fields and can also be passed between generations (Bourdieu, 1977). As this capital is passed between generations or reproduced from generation to generation and maintained over time, possession of this entitlement can appear natural and legitimate and hence its possession may not be questioned (Webb et al., 2002). Cultural capital has the capacity to operate as a resource to access rewards that are socially determined (Bourdieu, 1977).

Similar to cultural capital, social capital is acquired over time and confers power on those who hold it (Moore, 2012). Social capital can be developed by creating social or religious networks, and by forming relationships (Thomson, 2012). Social networks are generally a source of information, or power in the field, which can be accumulated and exchanged for increased social connections or to acquire advantage. As capital receives its value from the field in which it operates, it can be better understood when viewed together with habitus and field, a relationship that will now be discussed.

**Field**

Developed later than the concepts of habitus and capital (Yang, 2014), Bourdieu uses the concept of field to refer to the social space, the structured network and the source of value where interactions occur (Bourdieu 1973, 1984, 2007). Bourdieu suggested that, to understand any social interaction, it is important to consider the social space in which interactions take place (Thomson, 2012). The field
has a role to play in the production and dissemination of different versions of social experience. The field is a semi-autonomous entity that is fluid and dynamic (Bourdieu 1973, 1986). The field, with specific rules, keeps agents in their place (Yang, 2014). All agents who occupy a field have a common interest based on the field itself (Shim, 2012). Interestingly, capital is generally distributed unevenly across a field, according to the rules of the field. Individuals will possess varying amounts and configurations of economic, symbolic, cultural and social capital in a field (Grenfell, 2012). Fields are also sites of struggle and the struggle varies according to the structure, rules and the purpose of each field (Bourdieu, 1977; Shim, 2012). Additionally, occupants of each field participate in the common interest of the field according to the ‘rules of the game’, and in response to the possibilities and constraints established in the field based on their position and perception of the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Yang, 2014).

One of the benefits of using the concept of field is that it allows a deep analysis of the social space at different levels; that is, it enables one to identify the field of power, to locate the field of research within this larger field of power and then to consider the individuals in the field and the power they hold or seek (Mills & Gale, 2010; Thomson, 2012). This adds depth to an understanding of the operation of the field. Specifically, it sheds light on the relationships that operate between the broader field of power, the field of education and the specific field of a school.

The inter-relationship of Bourdieu’s concepts

Capital, habitus and field operate together and are also interdependent. Bourdieu suggests that a person’s behaviour is the result of one’s habitus, the capital accessed or activated, and their actions according to the rules of the game in the field; the result is behaviour or practice (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Maton, 2012, p. 50). The equation looks like this: \((\text{habitus}) (\text{capital}) + \text{field} = \text{practice}\) (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 101).

Use of Bourdieu’s concepts of capital, habitus and field allows the exploration of specific interactions, particularly those conducted ‘below the surface’. These thinking tools make it possible to name what is occurring within interactions, rather than ignoring or accepting what generally occurs or may not be seen. Bourdieu claims behaviours that often occur are ‘masked’ ignored or accepted and he has labelled this response as ‘misrecognition’ (Webb et al., 2002; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Use of Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’ supports the unmasking and deeper understanding of practice in a particular field (Maton, 2012; Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

The significance of these Bourdieusian ‘thinking tools’ within this particular research setting is powerful given the demographic of the school, (96 per cent CALD) where 25 per cent of the population is new to the school at any one time (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989). The parents are
apprentices in this Australian field of education and are learning the ‘rules of the game’ identifying the value of their possessed cultural capital and the power of their habitus (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Use of Bourdieu’s framework promotes the unmasking of these interactions.

**Application of Bourdieusian research methodology**

Bourdieusian theory and methodology attempt to dig beneath surface appearances and ‘work towards a more just social order’ (Lenzo, 1995, p. 17). Employing Bourdieu’s ‘thinking tools’, habitus, capital and field are only one part of this approach, and only one half the story (Grenfell, 2012). These concepts are not abstract notions and only make real sense when applied to practical research as they present a concise view of the world (Grenfell, 2012). Bourdieusian-based research is an ongoing exploration between theory and practice for the purpose of clarifying significant interactions that occur in everyday situations, constantly comparing findings with theory in order to note different practice. As the aim of this research is to find ways to recognise and embrace all parents in CALD school communities, Bourdieusian theory and research method is useful as it opens the way to explore and redefine power relations and social capital (Grenfell, 2012; Thompson, 2001).

As noted, Bourdieusian research is focused on uncovering social and educational inequalities by disclosing everyday interactions that may occur unnoticed (Maton, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Bourdieu recommended a three-step process in conducting research. The first step is the consideration of a particular phenomenon located in a practical context with the intention of identifying what is going on (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010). The second step is to identify the most appropriate data to collect to support the examination of the identified phenomenon and how to best use this information (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Within the third step, the analysis of the field, there are also three levels. Bourdieu suggests the first level of the field analysis identifies the position of the research field in terms of the broader field of power. This is followed by a second level of analysis, surveying the field of investigation itself and the inhabitants of the field to identify who occupies positions with legitimate or institutionalised power in this field and who competes for this power. The third level of field analysis is to note the habitus of the agents in the field and the relationships that operate between these individuals (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

In addition to the above three-step process, Bourdieu also encourages the researcher to objectify themselves in order to reduce or eliminate bias (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Bourdieu (1992) recommended that the researcher identify their position in the social space, ‘in the game’. This includes a comprehensive identification of the researcher’s habitus, position in the academic and scholarly world, together with their motivation for conducting the research. The next step is to
identify the orthodoxy of the research site and why ‘we think this way’ (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2010). Finally, given a researcher can only ever offer a partial and limited view of a phenomenon based on their own interpretation, Bourdieu urges the researcher to be clear about their moral purpose, the usefulness of the research and the opportunity that may emerge from their work (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). This methodology reflects the approach that has been adopted throughout this research and in the field analysis that follows.

As both school principal and researcher, I was aware of the potential of presenting a biased view in this research. My goal was to investigate and enhance parent-involvement practices to support CALD parents in the school that I led. I was committed to reporting accurately, avoiding stereotypes, reducing bias and not overlooking any weaknesses in school practice (Earl, 2005; Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). I attempted to reduce bias in this work by employing Bourdieu’s framework as a way of distancing myself from the environment and creating a different way of observing the day-to-day activities of the school. Additionally, all staff, students and the parent community were informed that I was conducting this investigation as part of this professional doctorate and that my work was being supervised by academics from Western Sydney University. All members of the school community had access to a written explanation of the project and the contact details of my supervisors. This information was available in community languages.

**The three-phase field analysis**

To support this theoretical reflection, a three-phase field analysis of Norton PS follows, as practical application is key to the effectiveness of Bourdieusian research methodology (Grenfell, 2012). The first phase of the analysis identifies Norton PS in terms of the broader field of power, in this case education. The second phase of the analysis is the identification of power held by the occupants of Norton PS and the third level of analysis is noting the impact of the habitus of occupants at the school. A Bourdieusian perspective provides the structure to help identify the mechanisms of cultural reproduction and discrimination through an analysis of the operation of power in the school field (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

**The field of power**

The Norton PS field operates as a subset of the field of education and is subject to the policies and expectations of the system at the national, state and regional level. Norton PS also has some degree of autonomy from the external field and is subject to the expectations of the local community, parents and teachers (Yang, 2014). It is through the autonomy that the school has, that specific practices and policies have been developed that support the needs of the school community, in particular, parent-involvement practices. An additional field operates within the school field at a
The classroom as a field varies according to the skill, habitus and capital of each individual teacher. As a part of the field, the classroom environment also offers opportunity for stakeholders to activate their cultural capital or be denied this opportunity (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Identification of inhabitants with legitimate power

The second level of field analysis is to identify who holds the legitimate positions of power and who competes for this power across the social space (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). This level of analysis provides insight regarding the ways power manifests itself in the everyday interactions in this field. Many subtle interactions may not be noticed or are ‘masked’ without this level of analysis (Webb et al., 2002; Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

There are seven discrete groups in the Norton PS field who have access to some level of legitimate power. These include students, parents, teachers, the principal, the leadership team, school administration staff and members of partner organisations. Within these groups are subgroups operating at different levels that may compete for power, which may not always be considered legitimate. One example of these subgroups is teachers who at times either compete for power over issues such as playground arrangements and use of resources, or who seek to display their knowledge of the field. These practices are all displays of cultural capital, as they imply knowledge and may bring advantage (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Other subgroups that function in this field include friendship groups who may also compete for power, as social capital can also confer power. These subgroups operate within the teaching staff, parents, and students and are often formed based on the length of time in the school. In addition to the cultural capital shared by each of the subgroups, social networks are created by these subgroups that offer social capital, and hence power to its members (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson, 2012). Subgroups may also form based on culture, religion or faith and hence provide a degree of social capital to the members. The connections created through subgroup relations may be invisible in the field and also require unmasking or identifying to view the operation of power (Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

While the principal has key positional or institutional power at Norton PS, the principal is not always the point of power as the effective operation of this power requires acceptance from within the field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The leadership team also has access to institutional power and similarly requires recognition and acceptance from others in the field for their power to bring benefit to this team and the field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Other players may compete for leadership power by rejecting decisions and seeking collegial support for alternative practices. Such occurrences may be subtle and hence may not be noticed immediately. These practices have been described by

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18 See Professional Practice Initiative 2 for further discussion of these fields.
Weininger and Lareau (2003, p. 382) as rituals of co-operation, and require uncovering to reveal the impact of such practices on interactions. Teachers possess a degree of legitimate power in the field particularly in their relationships with students and parents as they are in the position to acknowledge and encourage displays of cultural capital or reject them (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The school’s administration staff members also possess a certain amount of power, as they are often the first point of contact for visitors to the school and consequently provide the first welcome or rejection in this field (Lamont & Lareau, 1988).

Some students enjoy the possession of recognised power through membership of the Student Representative Council (SRC). These classroom-based positions are elected democratically and elected students have an opportunity to express the views of their classmates. Discussions during monthly SRC meetings focus on school-based matters covering playground issues, wearing uniforms and ways to celebrate cultural events. Students also exercise power through the relationships that operate between school and home as they frequently act as a bridge between these two environments (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Seitsinger et al., 2008). Students also carry responsibility for communication between the school and home, including translating notes or explaining school requests to parents or caregivers. Parents at Norton PS have access to power in the field through direct requests for information on matters that affect their children, membership of the Parents and Citizens group (P&C) plus power within their social networks. Membership of the Parents and Citizens group (P&C) is open to all parents and community members and provides a limited avenue for parents to access power through decisions regarding parent activities and fundraising. Parents can also exercise power in the school field by choosing not to be present and consciously withdrawing their presence. This strategy, however, may not be noticed within the field or it may be interpreted as a lack of interest (Crozier, 1999). Members of partner organisations access some power in the field through their capacity to attract resources to support activities in the field.

The seven groups mentioned above have some degree of legitimate power within the Norton PS field, although the operation of power by each group may or may not be formally recognised. Significantly, in addition to the legitimate power held by these groups, each group has the capacity to exercise further power within the field through their ability to acknowledge and accept each other’s attempts to display valued capital or to reject these efforts (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). This is noteworthy when the act of accepting or rejecting is directed toward newcomers to this field who may not ‘know the rules of the game’ and may be unsure of the value of their cultural capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). As there is a high turnover of the school

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For more discussion on this topic, see Professional Practice Initiative 1 and Professional Practice Initiative 2.
population annually, ranging from 18 per cent to 32 per cent during the time of this research, such rejection is of further significance. Clearly, those occupants with greater legitimate power stand to have greater impact on the operation of the field and its occupants because of the potential effect of their actions. Yet, subgroups can also impact on the operation of power in the field through their ability to reject the efforts of others to demonstrate their cultural capital and their understanding of the rules of the game. Bourdieu (1974) suggests that the rejection and exclusion of the cultural capital of others is a pervasive form of power, as such acts have the ability to rob individuals of resources and self-confidence, and can lead to negative discrimination (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Reay, 2004).

Despite all groups having access to some sense of power, it is clear that the level of power is both controlled and legitimised by the school field and varies with the capital, habitus and the location in the field of each individual (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). As such, the power of some group members may not be consistent or evenly supported by all agents in the field. This uneven support may lead to parents, in particular, experiencing little power in the field. Furthermore, as the classroom has been identified as an additional field of power operating in the school field, parents’ sense of power can be easily eroded by simple or unintended actions from individual teachers, or the school rules. For example, teachers generally do not have conversations with parents during lesson times due to their duty of care to be observant of all children. This may not be understood by parents, and may be experienced by them as disinterest or rudeness on the part of the teachers. Again, CALD parents can be left feeling excluded and find themselves in a deficit or negative location in the field, simply because they are not aware of the practices and expectations of the field (Bourdieu, 1974). Parents from CALD backgrounds new to the Australian education field may have very different expectations based on experiences in their country of origin and consequently find the rules operating in the field confusing or difficult to access (Denessen et al., 2007).

The impact of habitus of agents in the field

The third and final level of field analysis is the consideration of the habitus of the individuals in the field and the opportunities associated with this habitus (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Such analysis provides information regarding the impact of habitus on relationships and interactions in the field. Just as there are a number of groups at Norton PS who have access to different forms and degrees of power, occupants in the field possess a range of different habitus, particularly as the occupants come from a broad range of cultures, countries and social and economic environments (Cardona et al., 2009; Mills & Gale, 2007). While recognising the broad range of habitus in this field, given the scope of this paper on parent involvement, the habitus of two groups will be considered: those who have an understanding of the expectations of this school system and those who are not
fully aware of the expectations (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The first group includes the principal, the leadership team, teachers, members of partner organisations and those parents who have had an apprenticeship in the field and are therefore informed of the operation of the field. The second is largely formed by parents and their children who are new to the country and the culture and have limited or no knowledge of the expectations in the field. Both of these groups exhibit great variation within their habitus according to the conditions under which their habitus was developed including the position they hold in the field, the length of time in the position and the length of time in the country, among other factors (Cardona et al., 2009; Reay, 2004).

Though habitus is generative and malleable, it may be too challenging for parents new to a country to respond to the array of demands related to settlement, and to immediately react in the way anticipated by the school as it is generally outside their experience (Bourdieu, 2007; Cardona et al., 2009; Yang, 2014). For this reason, CALD parents are not able to respond as the knowledgeable group would anticipate them to do so. In Bourdieu’s terms, they do not know the rules of the game. The first group however, expects that parents entering the field and enrolling their children in the school implicitly agree to the rules of the school (Yang, 2014). For CALD parents new to a school this is unachievable.

The school rules themselves are both explicit and implicit and the school community generally expects co-operation from parents regardless of the opacity of rules (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). Failure to meet these expectations can result in negative impacts on families new to a school and result in feelings of rejection (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001).

Conversely, teachers’ professional habitus constructed within the field of education generally suggests knowledge of both the rules and the expectations of this field formed through their apprenticeship. This knowledge and understanding of the field places teachers in a position of power (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). Subsequently, teachers are in a position to accept or reject parents’ efforts to activate their habitus in the field and displays of capital from their colleagues. The ‘rules of the game’ in the school field will impact on how the habitus of others is received and legitimised by the school field (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). A number of teachers at Norton PS are also from CALD backgrounds (45 per cent) which may suggest some commonality of experience and habitus with parents from similar backgrounds and an empathy with them.

The role CALD teachers can potentially play as ‘cultural role models’ for CALD parents is significant, as they may demonstrate power, an understanding of the field and provide an example of cultural capital acquired and activated in a new field (Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Consequently, the
relationships teachers form with parents are also meaningful, as teachers are in a position to encourage and accept parents’ efforts at demonstrating their competence, understanding and their capital, or of rejecting these efforts (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003). Such positive interactions have the power to enhance the self-confidence of CALD parents and validate their cultural capital (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Reay, 2004). As these interactions are often brief and private, it may difficult to notice or be aware of their significance in the field. The acceptance or rejection of CALD parents’ interactions is of particular importance, as school may be the main place where parents experience valued cultural capital and have the opportunity to demonstrate and activate their capital (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Teachers, particularly teachers from CALD backgrounds, are in the position to serve as ‘cultural role models’ for students as well as their parents. Having CALD teachers in a culturally-diverse school with a significant percentage of new migrants can help parents and students from CALD backgrounds to become part of the school community by increasing their social and cultural capital.

Similarly, leaders also possess a professional habitus and legitimate power in the field, which positions them to accept, encourage or reject the activation and demonstration of parents’ cultural capital (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003). In this field, this includes leaders accepting displays of a broad range of cultural capital that belong to the parents’ specific cultural groups that they wish to display at the school (Lingard & Christie, 2003). Leaders could note culturally-specific practices displayed by parents including a preference to respond to verbal (rather than written) invitations to school events and parents accepting rather than judging school decisions (Bakker & Denessen, 2007; Cardona et al., 2009; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008). While parent acceptance of school decisions is often interpreted as disinterest rather than respect, agents possessing power in the field can support the operation of such practices from parents new to the field rather than questioning or rejecting such practices (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001). The next phase of the field analysis is the identification of the ‘doxa’ operating in the field.

The importance of doxa

Doxa operates in conjunction with habitus and the structures of the field and is informed by, and informs, the field structures and habitus (Deer, 2012). Doxa is the taken-for-granted beliefs that are linked to habitus and field and hence support the often unquestioned reproduction of the social structures of the field (Deer, 2012). The doxa operating in this field suggests that the greater power is distributed to those who have been in the field longest, particularly those with institutional power.
(teachers) rather than parents (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

This three-phase field analysis by identifying the uneven distribution of power within the field, the habitus of those within the field and the doxa, the taken for granted beliefs that impact on who has the power, allows for the exploration of the complexity of this field by providing a mechanism to explore its social and cultural diversity (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). The framework provides the researcher some distance from the field, new ways of seeing interactions and the practices operating, together with the language to articulate these interactions. Use of this framework may lead to new information or a different understanding of the field. Drawing on this information, it is clear that there is a range of different agents whose power is legitimated by the field (the seven identified groups). This power is moderated by the habitus of these groups who are informed and inform the field and their location in the field. The operation of the field is also impacted by the doxa and the researcher’s habitus and motivation. Through the practical operation of Bourdieusian research methodology it is possible to identify the impact and influence of habitus and capital across the three fields identified at Norton PS.

The nexus of theory and practice

As noted earlier, while several practices that support cultural reproduction have been identified, they remain largely unexplored in research literature that investigates cultural reproduction in relation to parent involvement (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Bourdieusian theory has the capacity to illuminate these practices, and is most effective when applied in context where the concepts operate as analytical tools. A number of themes emerged from the systematic application of the Bourdieusian-based methodology in relation to the operation of cultural reproduction in the research site. Employing the understandings that arise from these themes has the potential to challenge discriminatory structures and practices that support cultural reproduction and the maintenance of the deficit location of CALD parents at Norton PS. The themes identified include the impact of the structure of schools on the interactions of CALD parents (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003) and the narrow view of acceptable habitus and capital operating in the school field (Mills & Gale, 2010). Other matters that have been identified and not fully explored in the three-level field analysis are the limited school-generated opportunities for parents to activate and demonstrate their capital and the often casual acceptance or rejection of parents’ efforts to activate and demonstrate their capital in the field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Furthermore, CALD parents may experience discrimination as a result of both racism and the limited binary view of parents, often operating in schools, where parents are considered as either ‘good parents’, that is, parents who act in an expected way, or ‘not good’ (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier &
Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001). Similarly, barriers that operate in the school field also serve to maintain practices that have the capacity to discriminate against CALD parents and restrict their movement in the field (Carreon et al., 2005; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Reay, 1999, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006. The nexus of theory and practice can be explored by considering the actions in the school field through a theoretical lens.

**The impact of the school field**

The education field has been identified as problematic in its inflexible operation, with stratified organisation where each level of formal education is seen as being superior to the preceding level (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). For example, primary school is generally considered superior to preschool, and university or tertiary education superior to secondary school. As the education system is populated by staff who are generally educated in this field (the education system), they often seek to access and exercise forms of power available to them and tend not to question the established structures and practices (Crozier, 2001; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). This can form part of the doxa supporting the status quo of the field and can lead to a field that remains remarkably resistant to change (Deer, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). In this context, staff often become the unintended supporters of the status quo, limiting parent options and reinforcing the normalising of a narrow parental role (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). Staff knowledge of the field and their expectation of specific practices may devalue the position of parents and position them in a deficit location (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2010). Additionally, schools have specific rules and expectations that may control the movement of all individuals and function to keep people in their place further ensuring maintenance of the status quo (Mills & Gale, 2010; Yang, 2014). Significantly, this practice presents staff as complicit in discrimination and possibly the unintentional supporters of racist practices (Baquedano-López et al., 2013), particularly as they hold valued power in the field (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). These practices have the potential to impact negatively on the relationships between parents and teachers, and present school protocols as discriminatory, limiting parents’ access to the school. Yet conversely, these same practices may be seen by school staff as ‘business as usual’. Critically, such practices, when not checked or challenged, can lead to institutionalised racism becoming an acceptable part of a school’s culture (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). The school field that supports discrimination, whether intended or not, can reduce both parent involvement and the impact of parent involvement practices on the school.

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20 This is explored in detail in Professional Practice I 1.
As the capital and habitus of CALD parents are often considered of limited value in the field, it is unsurprising that some parents may feel unwelcome and experience psychological barriers to physically entering the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mills & Gale, 2010; Reay, 2004). It may therefore be difficult for CALD parents to show their interest in their children’s school-based education, thus missing opportunities to attract capital, and demonstrate their embodied capital, informed habitus and knowledge of the field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). CALD parents need a ‘legitimate’ way to demonstrate their interest and require a purpose to visibly enter or engage with the field in order to mobilise and display their capital. This can be done by the school creating tailored programs for parents, extending specific invitations and creating a welcoming environment (Crozier, 2001; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Jeynes, 2011; Lopez et al., 2001; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Such considerations create opportunities for involvement that may also break down psychological obstacles that restrict parents’ entry into the field (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997).

Changing conditions

Considering that change is possible (and often necessary), for example when families migrate and move from a familiar to an unfamiliar context, there may be conditions that facilitate this change and challenge the status quo in schools. Based on a Bourdieusian analysis of the operation of the field, Yang (2013) has suggested four conditions required to support change. They are:

1. a discernible difference between habitus and field
2. specific pedagogy
3. reflexive practice
4. an open system where borders are blurred and similarities exist between fields.

Would these four conditions support change for CALD parents at Norton PS? Considering the first condition, Yang (2013) posits that when a significant difference exists between an individual’s habitus and the habitus required by the field, individuals become conscious of their behaviours and start to modify or adjust their habitus to better respond to the demands of the field. As habitus is malleable, generative and responsive to the field, Yang’s (2013) first element of change is feasible (Bourdieu, 1977; Maton, 2012: Reay, 2004). The second condition of change, according to Yang (2013, p. 11), is the need for explicit pedagogy, which occurs when agents gain a repertoire of behaviours suitable in the field through conscious practice or practical experience. As habitus can lead to different practices in response to the possibilities and constraints of the field this condition is also feasible (Reay, 2004). The third condition of change requires agents to function in a reflexive way, where they consider their behaviour and interactions, noting if adjustments in habitus will
support behaviour suitable to the field. If one becomes conscious of their behaviours, as suggested in Yang’s (2013) first condition, and as one’s cultural capital is developed over time, these conditions of change could also be met by CALD parents (Bourdieu, 1977). Finally, Yang (2013) posits that borders between fields are now blurred, and change or adjustment is possible as the changes required may not be dramatic.

There are many conditions currently operating across contemporary culture that support change including cultural diversity, worldwide migration and the impact of technology; these all suggest that change is unavoidable. Thus, it appears that the conditions identified above could enable CALD parents to exercise change if there were no limitations to their movement in the field or the acceptance of their habitus (Yang, 2014). However, based on the insights drawn from this Bourdieuan-based analysis of Norton PS, there appear to be a number of limitations to parents’ movements in the field and narrow acceptance of their habitus and capital (Carreon et al., 2005; Crozier, 1999, 2001, 2003; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Kim, 2009; Lopez et al., 2001; Reay, 1999, 2004; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

Yang’s (2013) four conditions for change may inform change within this field given that different behaviours are required to limit cultural reproduction, unintended racism and discrimination within the field of education. Yet, change may be prevented by the inflexibility of the field of education. Still, the question remains, is it CALD parents who need to change, or is change required at a systems level where practices in the field of education need to be responsive to current social and cultural conditions and trends? Change to the status quo operating throughout the field of education would clearly be a significant process requiring extensive time, support, resources and specific pedagogy (Yang, 2014). Yet, considering the operation of habitus, capital and field within the context of Yang’s four conditions of change, some change or restructuring may be possible in the current research location. It may be possible to modify the field at Norton PS to support the location of parents in different and varied parts of the field, to reconceptualise the roles of parents and to provide opportunities for them to demonstrate and extend their habitus and capital.21

The insights drawn from the field analysis and reflection on the impact of habitus and cultural capital in the field, are significant to the operation of cultural reproduction and the location of parents at the research site. This reflection suggests that the inflexibility of the school field leads to cultural reproduction that limits the movement and the involvement of CALD parents in the field. Cultural reproduction is further supported by the doxa of the field and the seemingly limited opportunities for CALD parents to activate and demonstrate appropriate cultural capital and informed habitus.

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21 These possibilities are explored more fully in Professional Practice Initiative 3 (PPI 3).
Based on these insights, changes are required in the field that challenge the existing cultural reproduction and that create opportunities for CALD parents to have a broader range of opportunities in the field.

**Future directions**

This reflection has drawn on the praxis between Bourdieusian theory and research methodology to develop insights regarding limiting, discriminatory practices operating in one school. As practical application is key to the effectiveness of Bourdieusian theory, a systematic application of his theoretical framework promoted a layered view of the school field and its complexities and resulted in a deeper examination of daily interactions as played out at Norton PS (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). These everyday interactions include the operation of power in the field and the impact of habitus and capital to uncover sources of cultural reproduction that can lead to discrimination, specifically racism (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Thomson, 2012; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Racism in the school field is complex and may operate in multiple forms; it can be subtle, silent and often unintentional (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). The systematic application of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework provided a critical perspective and allowed the reflection on the interactions and issues operating below the surface (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Thomson, 2012; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Armed with this information it may be possible to pursue change at Norton PS.

An implied discussion running through the parent involvement research is the need for CALD parents to change and display the expected behaviour by a demonstration of habitus and capital appropriate in the field (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Mills & Gale, 2010; Roksa & Potter, 2011). This theoretical reflection raises the question: Do CALD parents need to change in order to be acknowledged as interested parents entitled to a position in the field that demonstrates power and capability? Rather than accepting that CALD parents need to change, or requiring CALD parents to change, three matters need to be considered. Firstly, is it possible for parents to change? Secondly, as society is becoming more diverse with schools catering for a broad range of cultures and ethnicities, with an equally diverse range of habitus and capital, is it CALD parents who need to change (Freebody et al., 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009)? Finally, is change required at a systems level in the school field?

The next stage of this study, reported in PPI 3, will use these insights and questions to consider responses to a series of interviews with representative agents from the school community to identify practices in the school that support parent involvement. It is anticipated that this will provide more nuanced information regarding the impact of habitus and capital on parents’ location in the field,
and the effectiveness and limitations of school protocols and practices in promoting parent involvement. It is critical to develop practices that disturb the field, create different conditions and limit social reproduction that can lead to the continued deficit location of parents.

Considering the specific conditions at Norton PS as identified through the use of the Bourdieusian theory and field analysis, it may be possible to change the field to better support parents’ needs. At the same time it may also be possible to create conditions that support CALD parents to activate and demonstrate their cultural capital and to support them to unlock and employ the cultural codes that operate in this new field (Bourdieu, 1977; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2002, 2007; Reay, 1998, 2004; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Such conditions may relocate parents from a CALD background from a deficit location to multiple locations in the field. Nonetheless, it is worth noting in pursuing a goal of diversity and opportunity, that social games and their rules are not always consistent or fair (Bourdieu, 2000). This remains the challenge.
**Professional Practice Initiative 2 (PPI 2)**

**Application of Bourdieusian theory on parent involvement in a culturally and linguistically diverse school community**

The first PPI identified the parent-involvement practices at Norton PS and evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of these practices according to the available research on parent involvement. The purpose of this second PPI is to explore the value given to parent involvement in a predominantly multicultural school. It responds to the findings of PPI 1 regarding the part the school can play in repositioning parents from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background from a deficit location. This paper integrates a Bourdieusian view of cultural reproduction, the international research literature on parent involvement, and the views of the Norton PS community toward parent involvement. The information gathered through this initiative will inform school practices to support parent involvement for CALD parents, challenge cultural reproduction of unquestioned negative social views and have broader application beyond this school.

**The study**

This PPI 2 is divided into five sections. The first section outlines the research process used to collect information from the community and provides an overview of the participants in the study. The second section considers the contribution of Bourdieusian theory to an understanding of the social interactions at Norton PS. Section three analyses the themes identified in the data collected at the school and section four is a discussion of the findings that emerged from this analysis. Finally, the potential of these findings are considered in relation to how they might inform school understanding and strategies to support parent involvement for CALD parents.

**Context**

As stated in PPI 1, at the time of the study there were 540 students enrolled at Norton PS, with the majority being from language backgrounds other than English. The predominant cultural groups in the school included Lebanese, Samoan, Vietnamese, Tongan, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Burmese. The suburb of Norton is identified as being a low socio-economic status (SES) area and attracts residents new to Australia or those seeking affordable rental accommodation. Norton is also an area of high mobility and it is common for families to move out of the area once established socially and economically. Generally, at any time, 25 per cent of the school population have been in the country for four years or fewer.

The context is significant to this study as it dictates school practice and also informs the research method. The research was conducted in a way that was respectful to the diverse nature of the
community and allowed those from different cultural backgrounds to share their experiences. Through interviews with various stakeholders, this PPI sought to answer the following questions based on insights drawn from the parent-involvement literature.

1. What is the purpose of parent involvement at Norton PS?
2. How can the school most effectively involve parents in their children’s learning?
3. In what ways do school structures impact on parent involvement?
4. What assistance do teachers need to support parent involvement in a large culturally-diverse community school?

These questions were broadly discussed with all participants and varied slightly for each group according to their role.22

Method

As my goal was to develop an understanding of the experiences of various community members and hear different points of view, I sought input from a broad cross section of the group who could offer their experience of parent involvement (Delpit, 1988). As the intent of this PPI was to gain information to shape practice, I explicitly sought a purposive group of participants from different cultural backgrounds who had been involved in the school for varied lengths of time. Volunteers were sought from different stakeholder groups in the community, specifically parents, teachers, students and members of partner organisations who supported the school. This allowed a collection of information to be captured reflecting the complexity of the field (Merriam, 1998). Considering the multicultural population of the Norton PS community, qualitative research was considered the most appropriate method of data collection as it allowed direct and detailed input from the community (Denzin, 2009). A qualitative approach gives participants the opportunity to describe their experiences in their own voices and to share the subtle nuances of their insights (Delpit, 1988; Harvey, 1989). Such rich participant input was not accessible through other methods (Mills & Gale, 2007; Oakey, 2004). Qualitative data were collected via two means: focus groups and semi-structured interviews. This approach made it possible for interviewees to relate their own stories, in their own language or through the use of interpreters, thus capturing a range of personal views (Crozier, 2003; Mills & Gale, 2007; Oakey, 2004). All volunteers were offered the use of professional interpreters to provide assistance with language, as required, as I was keen to hear a range of viewpoints and did not wish to exclude any interested party from the investigation (Delpit, 1988).

22 See Appendix 2: Focus Groups and Semi-structured Interview Questions.
Furthermore, as English is the second language for most residents at Norton PS, it was important to acknowledge the linguistic diversity by offering the use of interpreters.

Information was collected through two focus groups which explored the ways parents and the school could work together effectively. The first focus group was conducted with four parents, four teachers and a member of a community organisation to identify attitudes towards parents’ involvement in their children’s school-based learning and identify points of commonality. A second focus group was conducted with a group of four primary school students to collect the students’ experiences and perspectives. Students are generally omitted from the investigation of parent involvement and I was keen to include their insights as they are in a unique position with knowledge of both home and school environments (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Seitsinger et al., 2008). The first focus group ran for 45 minutes and the student focus group ran for approximately 20 minutes.

Data were then collected via individual semi-structured interviews. A total of ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with a range of volunteers including four parents, four teachers, a school administration officer and a member of a community organisation. The semi-structured interviews used a maximum of four open questions for each interview, as noted earlier. The length of these interviews ranged from 12 to 45 minutes. The transcripts were analysed manually according to the themes that presented in the data.

Research participants

A variety of volunteer participants were sought from different stakeholders in the community. All school-based participants were recruited through the school or staff newsletters or via requests for volunteers at school assemblies and during meetings. All announcements and invitations regarding the research were made by a member of the staff who was not the researcher. This was done in an attempt to limit the impact of my positional power, as I was holding a dual position of principal and researcher. Further written information about the research was made available to any interested members of the community providing details of the project, the time commitment and contact details if further information was required. This written information was also provided in a range of community languages for any interested parties. Volunteers for the student focus group were also recruited through the school’s newsletter, as parent consent was required for children who volunteered. Again, written information about the research was made available in English and community languages for any interested parents, guardians or children. Participants from community organisations were recruited via email communication distributed to all organisations who were affiliated with the school. The email included a written description of the research project and the name of a contact person for further information, who again was a staff member and not
the researcher. Participation from community organisations was sought as staff from these organisations conducted parent programs at the school and were part of the school community.

Eight parents volunteered to participate in the research. Four parents elected to participate in the focus group and four different parents volunteered to participate in the individual semi-structured interviews. These volunteers were all female and seven were born overseas. Although a diverse sample was sought in terms of gender, only one father volunteered to participate in the focus group. However, the family decided that the mother could provide more information and hence no adult males participated. Though not unusual to have mothers predominantly communicating with the school, fathers do have a presence at the school particularly in the afternoon when collecting children from school and attending parent-teacher interviews. Consequently, the parent participants in the study are not illustrative of the usual pattern of parent attendance at the school.

The parent participants came from a variety of cultural backgrounds including Tongan, Indian, Syrian, Fijian, Serbian, Vietnamese, Bosnian and Australian Lebanese and identified their cultural backgrounds during the focus group or semi-structured interviews. Three of the parent participants were employed. Only one participant elected to use an interpreter during the interview process. Seven of the eight participants are frequently at the school and all have ongoing relationships with the teaching staff, or at least with their child’s current teacher. Though the parent participants are culturally diverse, they do not reflect the full range of the parent community, rather they reflect some aspects of the parent community.

Significantly, there is strong criticism of ‘uninvolved parents’ in the parent-involvement literature. Hence I was interested in inviting parents who spent little time at the school to participate in this research to explore their views (Lawson, 2003). However, this was a complex endeavour to pursue. First, there were no volunteers from parents who are not regularly seen at the school, and as the principal, I did not wish to be seen to annoy parents by repeating invitations or suggesting other staff members repeat the invitation. Second, there were many parents who were frequently at the school who volunteered to participate in the research and I chose not to exclude these participants. However, I remained open to exploring the concept of ‘non-involved’ parents and the notion of a range of styles of involvement in the reconceptualisation of parent involvement.

Eight teachers volunteered to participate in the research, all were permanently employed at the school for periods of time ranging from six months to more than twenty years. Four were Australian born, three were born and educated overseas, and one was an Australian-born Lebanese woman living in a bilingual household. One participant was male, which represented 12 per cent of the teacher participants in the study and reflected the male/female ratio of the total teaching staff. Two
of the teacher participants held leadership positions. Both were Assistant Principals and each was responsible for supervising a section of the school comprised of approximately 170 students and eight members of staff. The school administration officer, who volunteered to be part of the research, had been permanently employed at the school for three years. She was born in Lebanon, educated in Australia and spoke both Arabic and English.

Four parents gave their permission for their children to participate in the research. These parents all had high levels of involvement in the school and two were members of the Parents and Citizens group (P&C). Two boys (from Year 4) and two girls (one from Year 5 and one from Year 6) participated in the student focus group. Their parents had not been involved in the research. Two affiliated organisations showed interest in participating in the research and with the approval of their managers, one organisation was represented in the focus group and another participated in a semi-structured interview. Both were female, reflecting the gender of the majority of workers from external organisations associated with the school.

Written consent was obtained from all adult participants at the time of the interview, and obtained from the parents of the student participants prior to the student focus group. All sessions were digitally recorded with the approval of the participants and transcribed by a professional transcriber. This included one interview conducted in a community language that was translated from Arabic into English for analysis. All participants were informed that involvement was anonymous, totally voluntary, and withdrawal from the project was possible at any time without penalty or censure. Confidentiality was guaranteed, participants’ names are replaced by pseudonyms and participants were de-identified in the transcriptions. Each transcript was read, analysed and themes were identified manually. The pseudonyms and positions of all participants are listed above. Their role is identified throughout the body of the work hereafter with the letter P for parent, T for teacher, S for student, C for staff from community organisation and A for the administration officer.

**Ethical considerations**

Both the focus group interviews and the semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher. As principal researcher, site manager and analyst, I was sensitive to the potential ethical issues and the conflict of interest possible in the project. As a consequence, I ensured that both the purpose of the study and the management of the process were articulated to the school community. I also avoided any disturbance to the normal school routine during the conduct of the research (Cresswell, 2007). Furthermore, to maintain the relationships I had developed with the community and in an effort to mediate power, I kept the interviews informal and friendly in nature. To maintain this casual tone, I made a point of not cutting off interviewees’ comments and avoided probing so as
not to suggest I was questioning their experience. Information regarding the research was made available in community languages and interpreters were available to explain matters, as required. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research both for individuals and organisations (Cresswell, 2007). As required by ethical protocols, all information regarding the research was stored in one secure location.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Cultural background</th>
<th>Identifier</th>
<th>Years associated with Norton PS</th>
<th>Employed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs Markov</td>
<td>Macedonian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs Fifita</td>
<td>Tongan</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Mrs Mourad</td>
<td>Australian/Lebanese</td>
<td>Parent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>N/A</td>
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<td>Mrs Chopra</td>
<td>Indian</td>
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<td>Parent</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Ms Stevens</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>Miss El Masri</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mr Tywman</td>
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<td>Teacher</td>
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<td>Jasmine</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mrs Abu-Rahman</td>
<td>Lebanese</td>
<td>School Administration Officer (SAO)</td>
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</table>

List of research participants
As the findings from PPI 1 had highlighted the weaknesses in the parent involvement activities operating at the school, I approached this part of the research with an interest in hearing community-based ideas to the barriers identified (Crozier, 2003). Despite my professional investment in the school, I remained committed to reporting accurately including any flaws or weaknesses in school practice that were articulated. I was also committed to avoiding stereotyping in reporting and ensuring the community benefited from any learning resulting from the research (Earl, 2005).

Clearly, with such a small number of participants from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, it is not the intention to generalise the findings. Rather, it is hoped that this range of participants will provide a view of the diversity, richness and complexity of the experiences of this school community. This range of views has the capacity to inform practices and facilitate increased parent involvement at a school level.

**Bourdieu’s theoretical perspective**

I continue to use Bourdieu’s theory of practice to examine the views of the school community toward parent involvement based on school practices. Bourdieu frequently used the analogy of a card game to demonstrate that all players are dealt cards, which he saw as capital, and everyone needed to learn ‘the rules of the game’ to use their cards effectively or activate their capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Parents are required to learn the school-based rules of the game called ‘parenting for schools’. They collect cultural capital and activate this capital or use it strategically. CALD parents often focus their parenting in the home where they have more control (Turney & Kao, 2009). The cards they collect through their parenting at home, may not be strategic in the game of school, as they are unseen, unless the field is sensitive to these actions (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). When school staff notice, accept and acknowledge evidence of parents’ home-based parenting, the parents’ cultural capital is acknowledged and can be activated, hence their cards, as capital, are valued (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

Drawing on this analogy, Bourdieu’s card game clarifies what may be happening for parents operating in a new field (school), as the school has certain expectations of parents that may not be obvious to all players. Schools expect parents to be visible in the school environment and comply with what are sometimes implied requests (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). When parents explicitly meet these expectations, or school staff acknowledge parents’ home-based efforts, parents are in a position to display their habitus, that is their habitual unconscious behaviour and activate their capital. Yet, the position for parents is complex, as the school expectations of them may appear restrictive (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Roksa & Potter, 2011). For
example, when parents are visible at school, and make additional requests, such as requests for additional information or extra homework for their child, this may attract disapproval, as schools are not usually organised to meet additional parent requests and this may be perceived as an imposition (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Roksa & Potter, 2011). The insights above will be considered when analysing the data.

**An analysis of data**

The interview transcripts were read three times to aggregate information and identify themes across participant groups (Stake, 1995). The focus of the first reading was on identifying themes that emerged within individual stakeholder groups, while the focus of the second reading was to ascertain the range of views and themes across stakeholder groups. During the third reading the focus was to identify references to the themes of power, habitus and capital and their impact from a Bourdieusian perspective (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

In the analysis of the interview data, significant patterns emerged across and between stakeholder groups. Six substantial themes were identified relevant to the operation of parent involvement at the school. These were:

1. the value of parent involvement
2. communication
3. English language proficiency
4. the formation of relationships
5. accessing information both about the school, the curriculum and community resources
6. limitations to current practice.

Further analysis of these themes identified the impact of the operation of power, habitus, cultural capital and cultural reproduction in the school. These themes are explored below using the responses of stakeholders that articulate the experiences of the community.

**The value of parent involvement**

As was reflected in the data, parent involvement was consistently valued across the participants. While all participants showed support for parent involvement, a single view of parent involvement was not in operation at Norton PS. Rather it presents as a multifaceted construct, as suggested by the range of participants’ comments. The perception of parent involvement varied across participants according to their role, their individual experiences of relationships, and their location in the field (Chrispeels, 1996).
Parents who participated in the research were at the school frequently and all participated in workshops and parent meetings conducted at the school. It appears these parents knew ‘the rules’ of the school and what is expected of them in the field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). They identified the regular opportunities they had to converse with the teachers, often daily, forming strong contacts with them and providing opportunities to understand more about their children’s learning. Unsurprisingly, these parent participants gave a clear message that their involvement was principally about their children’s learning. Participants identified different benefits of parent involvement. For example, Mrs Markov (P) considered it important because she could find out ‘how to help my children at home’; Mrs Phan (P) noted that being involved in the school allowed her to know ‘what her son was learning’; and Mrs Delic considered she ‘came to school to make sure my children have a good life’. For Mrs Chopra (P) it was ‘too important’ [to have access to] ‘teacher guidance for my son’s learning’. Mrs Markov (P) also suggested ‘parents and teachers working together make a child more comfortable’. Mrs Mourad (P) shared with the focus group that she found, ‘parents’ involvement boosts up the child’s confidence as well. Whenever a parent is involved, the child tends to have that confidence that they can do this and they can do that’. These comments from both Mrs Markov and Mrs Mourad reflect a sense of connection between home and school.

Barriers parents experienced were also identified through interview responses. Mrs Fifita (P) noted that she wished she had made contact with her child’s teacher earlier when the family first arrived in the country and made sure her child was comfortable. She explained ‘At first it was really, really hard because I did not get time to talk to the teacher and my son cried every day. He changed as soon as I came to school and talked to the teacher’. Mrs Fifita’s comment demonstrates how the barriers such as time constraints or not feeling welcome at the school can prevent parents from accessing the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Mrs Markov supported Mrs Fifita’s experience noting: ‘I would have liked to work together with the teacher in the beginning to make my daughter comfortable’. These mothers were interested in their children’s education and welfare yet may have been prevented from accessing the school by the restrictions placed by the school organisation, the difficulty in seeing the teachers or not knowing how to seek help (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). As a result, these mothers were unable to easily remedy their children’s concerns or to demonstrate their capital and habitus as interested parents. Parents who are confident to be at the school have the opportunity to exchange their cultural capital to be acknowledged, to form relationships and to acquire information about their children’s learning (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard and Christie; 2003). Furthermore, they also build their cultural capital from their presence at the school. While parent involvement is a process, as suggested in the introductory narrative, and parents learn about the school environment and the
possibilities available over time, there may be many negative experiences for parents during the early stages of the process which can shape their expectations of the school field.

Parent participants also reported they came to the school for assemblies, meetings, to attend workshops and to talk with other parents. Mrs Phan mentioned that she considered her Vietnamese friends were ‘shy and she liked to come to school to be with friends and have fun’. She also considered it was possible to form ‘friendships with the teachers’. So being at school provided an opportunity for Mrs Phan to develop her social capital. Parents also made recommendations during the interviews. Mrs Markov suggested it would be ‘helpful for parents to spend time in the classrooms and watch the teachers during lesson time as this would support parents more at home’. Mrs Delic (P) put forward the idea that parents ‘needed more time in the community room for them to talk and relax together’, thus creating opportunities to be in the field and develop capital.

Mrs Ayoob (P) held the view that the teachers and the school worked hard to support the involvement of parents. The school supports the parents a lot because from kindergarten to year 2 I felt very supported and involved and the school always does meetings and workshops.’

The parent comments generally suggested that teachers possess power in the field, as parents indicated they come to school to hear information not to exchange information or have two-way conversations with the teachers. In this field the teachers have institutionalised power strengthened by their professional habitus and an understanding of the expectations of the school system (Baquedano-López et al., 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). As a result, they appear to control the conditions for the formation of personal relationships and the development of capital (information) both of which impact on parent involvement (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

The positive views of parent involvement, as expressed by parents, were supported by teachers, who reinforced the value of parent involvement for the school and community. Teachers’ comments also indicated that parent involvement has a range of purposes that varied according to the teachers’ experiences. Ms Stevens (T), who had worked at the school for many years, reflected an understanding of the importance of congruity between home and school (Bourdieu, 1977; Robinson, 2007). Ms Stevens commented that she:

thinks it’s imperative that parents are involved because without their support for education of the children, then the children are trying to balance between what’s right at school and what’s right at home.
She also indicated that the frequent conversations she had with parents had a positive impact on her teaching. Ms Stevens noted that ‘these conversations help us [parents and teachers] to work together’. She also observed how pleased or proud students were when they saw their parent at school, for assembly, a meeting or to collect them after school. She commented that when ‘parents come to school, it makes the child feel that their learning is valuable and that their parents are interested in their learning’. This comment also implies the power of the school field in interactions and demonstrates the teachers’ view that parents gain approval by being at the school (Bourdieu, 1977). This reflects the literature findings that when parents are at school, they meet the expectations of the school and exchange their cultural capital for status as ‘good parents’ (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001).

Miss El Masri (T), who’s family migrated to Australia before she was born, spoke at length of the importance of seeing her mother at her primary school and the barriers her family faced in attempting to make sense of the school’s expectations. She explained:

I told Mum, ‘please volunteer in the canteen’ even though she didn’t know a word of English. She volunteered for half an hour one day, just to stand in the canteen while kids yelled at her about 10 cents change. But she did that for me because I needed her – I wanted to see her in my school. I wanted her to see where I go. I wanted to show off my school and I wanted to show off my mum. It was so important and it was just this being in the canteen. I’ll never forget it and I could never repay her because it was so massive what she did for me, just by showing up in the canteen. ... Now the family still talks about that day, it was so important. I still ask Mum, ‘Do you remember that time you went to the canteen?’ She says, ‘are you still talking about that? Get over it.’ I just say ‘Mum, that was the best day ever.’

This account provides insight into the experiences of a CALD child and parent now seen from the viewpoint of a teacher. It presents a picture of the complex interactions that are played out in the school field between power and capital and the different experiences according to an individual’s role and their location in the field. Now a teacher, Miss El Masri’s view of parent involvement is: ‘Okay, so my definition of parent involvement would be for the parent to ask the child about their learning for the day; to be interested in what they’re saying for the day.’

Due to her childhood experiences, she holds a broader view of parent involvement, indicating it includes activities that occur both at home and at school and the connection between these two environments. Miss El Masri suggested: ‘So for a teacher, parent involvement for me would mean [parents] asking me about their child and how they can help at home and helping in the classroom’. Such views reflect a valuing of home-based parenting, and the acceptance of parents’ cultural capital and habitus (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard and Christie; 2003). This view
also acknowledges the different positions parents can occupy in the field, rather than a narrow view of parents and parenting that frequently operates in schools (Bourdieu, 2007; Maton, 2012, p60). Parent involvement as described by Miss El Masri acknowledges the importance of at-home parenting.

Mrs El Sayed’s (T) comments also suggest an awareness of how important it is for ‘Parents like to see what we are doing in the classroom, then they will know the level of their children’s work and how they are working at school. They should know what’s going on at school.’ This also gives parents access to information about curriculum. Mrs El Sayed’s remarks suggest that school is the principal place of learning and parents need to be informed by school practice (Weiss et al., 2009). This reflects a doxa held in the school that teachers hold the most information regarding student learning (Deer, 2012). At the same time, this comment reflects the opportunity parents have to build their knowledge of the school and curriculum, and use this acquired capital to develop their children’s capital at home, creating stronger connections between home and school.

The value of parents knowing what is going on at school was also supported by the students’ comments. Zehra (S) considered: ‘it’s good for our teachers to know our parents, so then the parents would know our teacher’. Terina (S) wanted her parents ‘to see what we are doing at school’, and Aditya (S) noted that: ‘my parents – my mum comes to school all the time because like she wants to know about my education’. These comments suggest that students learn that there is greater power in the school field than in their homes and want their parents to be at the school. When parents are at school, they have the opportunity to build their knowledge of school and how it works and hence to further develop their capital and power.

Parent involvement was not only of interest to parents, students and teachers, it was also important to the school’s administration officer, who is often the first point of contact with parents at the school. Mrs Abu-Rahman (SAO) stated that:

parent involvement is like the parents coming into the school. Even if they’re just asking questions about the time of interviews, when are cooking classes, what’s in the canteen, how can you help me at home, what are the passwords? Every family is different and shows their interest in different ways and that’s parent involvement.

This view of parent involvement reflects an appreciation of the parents’ diverse needs and also shows the power held by knowing about the field and how it functions also enhances cultural capital.

Operating in a different capacity to all other stakeholders’, community partners referred to broader dimensions of the possible benefits of parent involvement, reflecting an appreciation of the role of parents across different learning environments (Weiss et al., 2009). Jasmine (C) also notes that
limited skill in English language does not stop parents from being supportive of their children’s learning. Jasmine was of the view that:

It’s very important for parents to be engaged in their children’s education; because involvement can be just coming to school and chatting, or having a cup of tea or coffee. But engaging in their children’s education, it’s about knowing what their children are doing in the classroom and supporting them at home. If they cannot speak or read English, that can be by providing the environment, encouraging the students to revise and study what they learnt in the classroom. That support is really very, very important. I can speak from my own experience [coming from overseas].

Jasmine’s comments reflect the work of Desforges and Abouchaar (2003), who suggest that good ‘at-home parenting’, as noted in the narrative, is of more value to student learning than school-based parent involvement, as parents have greater control in their home environment.

Parent involvement was valued by all stakeholders interviewed however, the benefits participants experienced varied according to their role and location in the field (Chrispeels, 1996). Participants identified that parent involvement was about children’s learning, relationships and building capital.

Communication

Responses from semi-structured interviews and focus groups revealed each group of participants held a different view of the purpose of communication and what was a desirable form of communication. In general, parents and teachers identified face-to-face communication as the most efficient and desirable form. This reflects the value placed on parent visibility in the school field for parents, teachers and students and the cultural capital attached to this practice (Bourdieu, 1977; Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001). The notion of parent visibility represents a binary tension that consistently operates across the parent-involvement discussion. When parents are visible at school, they attract cultural capital, yet regardless of the amount of parenting that occurs in the home, or under parent supervision, this may not attract acknowledgement or enhanced capital (Bourdieu, 1977; Crozier, 1999, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lopez et al., 2001).

As previously noted, the parent participants were present at the school daily or weekly and generally had frequent brief conversations with their children’s teacher. Mrs Delic (P) reported ‘the staff are very helpful, and very polite. I can ask the staff to help me’. Mrs Phan (P) related she can ‘talk to my son’s teacher every day. I am happy and confident at the school and I don’t feel stressful’. According to Mrs Chopra (P), ‘children need the guidance of their parents and the teacher. My son’s teacher guides me every afternoon. I can ask questions and get help.’
Again, this signals the specific opportunities available for parents who visit the school to develop their cultural capital and habitus (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). It is of interest that parents did not refer to a lack of communication, in fact, those interviewed generally indicated the frequent and easy access they had to teachers. During interviews parents did make requests for increased formal communication, specifically additional Parent Newsletters and Student Reports. Responses from semi-structured interviews and focus groups revealed each group of participants held a different view of the purpose of communication and what was a desirable form of communication. The parents identified a range of purposes for communication, as noted in the discussion of the previous theme of parent involvement. Purpose including friendship and fun. Mrs Ayoob (P) relayed via the interpreter that she could talk about anything at school and this was important as she had no family in Australia apart from her husband and son. [Interpreted] ‘... she feels free to come and if she sees anything, she speaks about it straight, yeah.’

The potential isolation due to lack of an extended family in Australia identified by Mrs Ayoob (P) is a common experience for members of the Norton PS community. This makes a significant case for the role school can play in welcoming parents, creating community and promoting their social capital (Chrispeels, 1996; Jeynes, 2011; Kim, 2009). Mrs Ayoob’s comment also indicates that, as a parent, she can speak up and be heard and have some power in the field.

Again, the teachers supported the parents’ views on communication. All teacher participants spoke of the importance of communication, particularly of informal conversations in the playground with parents before or after school. Mr Tywman who had only been working at the school for six months at the time of the interviews, noted that informing parents of what happened in the classroom is important. He explained:

I keep the communication open. Talk to the parent. Get out there. I go out there [into the playground] and I’m talking to the parents every day. What did we do today? Then the parents know what is happening in my classroom.

This view suggests both learning and power belong in the school field, rather than both at school and at home (Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). It also suggests less value given to home as a place of learning and to parents’ cultural capital and habitus, a pattern consistently repeated for CALD parents (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard and Christie; 2003). At the same time, it is an acknowledgement of parents’ role in learning, as Mr Tywman wants parents to be aware of what is happening in the classroom.
Parent participants generally spoke of the ease of communicating with teachers, however, teachers consistently identified that it was the responsibility of parents to seek information from the teachers. Mrs Kata (T) reported that: ‘The parents are very good here, but, we need them to be here more and talk with the teachers’. Unlike Mr Tywman (T) who was keen to report to parents, Mrs Martin (T) was of the view: ‘I think it’s basically [parents] having talks with the teachers and really being, I suppose, proactive in finding out what’s important for their child to learn’. These comments suggest that teachers are in a privileged position as the holders of professional knowledge and expect parents to approach them. These teachers did not reflect a sense of shared responsibility for student learning or acknowledge parents’ role or their cultural capital, rather it appears that teachers use communication to make connections with parents and to establish their power and credibility in the school as professionals (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003).

It is interesting that Mrs El Sayed (T), who was educated overseas, a fluent speaker of Arabic and not a native English speaker, considered that it was the teachers’ responsibility to encourage parents and to ‘give them [parents] a push’ to be involved in their children’s learning. She was of the view that ‘we [teachers] need to see them [parents]; we need them to listen to us. Yes, because what we are doing in classrooms is very important’. While this suggests parents and teachers work together, it also indicates a lesser valuing of the parents’ cultural capital by teachers and the possible rejection of that cultural capital (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). As noted in SP2, Bourdieu identified rejection as a pervasive form of power as it has the capacity to rob individuals of self-confidence and resources and, at the same time, supports discrimination (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Reay, 2004).

While the importance of congruity between learning at home and learning at school was identified by some teachers, there is a suggestion, as noted through the teachers’ comments above, that the important learning takes place at school and teachers are the holders of knowledge and therefore control the power (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). This demonstrates the power teachers have in the field, as identified by the ‘doxa’ of the school (Deer, 2012), and as noted in the field analysis. The doxa suggests first, that teachers are the best informed regarding student learning, and second, that parents are considered to be ‘poor’ or ‘not good’ parents when they do not act in ways expected of them at school (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). This includes conforming to teachers’ expectations about communication practices, such as seeking information from teachers. When the doxa that teachers hold the knowledge about student learning and parents must conform to the schools expectations is accepted, parents’ cultural capital and habitus attract less value. This

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23 For more information on this subject matter, see Scholarly Paper 2.
devaluing can occur even at times when parents assume their cultural capital and habitus is accepted and valued (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001).

The four students that formed the focus group were all in different class groups and part of different social groups. Their comments suggested that although they were making connections between home and school, they were the unintended supporters of the power imbalance between teachers and parents, and between school and home. They identified that parents needed to talk to teachers and come to school to be informed. According to Terina:

> Whenever my mum or dad comes up they know what I’m doing in class so, when I go home, they help me improve or where I need to be improved.

Zehra ‘liked to see her mum at school ... it’s nice and she can see what I’m doing’. I suggest this is also an example of students learning the rules of the game of schooling. The students may be better informed of these rules than the parents as they have greater exposure to school expectations and are aware that the cultural capital valued by the school is built and activated in the school field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

The representatives from community organisations also referred to the importance of communication. Jasmine stated that the school was:

> responsible for supporting parents with communication as parents’ level of confidence would impact on their readiness to communicate with staff [and recommended] using technology to help communication.

Joan indicated that the school could support communication by providing opportunities for parents and staff to share tasks together. She suggested ‘it’s quite different to do things alongside each other, not “telling” parents but “doing” things together’. Teachers and parents working together would also be an acknowledgement of parents’ cultural capital.

The analysis of participant responses uncovered the complexity of communication in a multicultural setting, drawing attention to the subtleties and layers of obstacles that parents may face. Mrs Markov (P) remarked ‘there has never been one single thing from my background – Serbian, Croatian, Bosnian or Macedonian, Cyrillic written in the school’. She described how isolating it was to never see her mother tongue written in the environment. She explained ‘when we see our language, we see there is respect for another language here’. This input from Mrs Markov was significant as she speaks and reads English fluently and is aware of the impact of culturally-appropriate symbols in the school, including script. Mrs Fifita (P) also reflected the complex communication needs of the school community by reporting that some ‘Pacific languages are not formal written languages so the
school cannot give a written invitation to all families’. Such information is valuable as it informs school practice. Mrs Taylor (T) noted that ‘many parents were not literate in their mother tongue’ and hence it would be of questionable value translating all documents for distribution to families. Miss El Masri (T) added to this complex picture by noting that many of the Arabic-speaking parents ‘do not understand “formal” Arabic as they speak a dialect and do not read Arabic’. Consequently, much information disseminated formally, including communication beyond the school, was not accessible to many parents. The obstacles identified in the interview data unmasked the challenges for both parents and the school in communicating together, and positioned both parents and teachers as holding information and informing the field.

In order for parents to build cultural capital valued by the school, they require access over time to the culture of the field, (Bourdieu, 1977; Crozier, 1999, 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Reay, 1998, 2004). However, without skill in the dominant language, it is challenging for parents to be in the field or access the knowledge of the field. This limits their capacity to build the cultural capital required by the field (Bourdieu, 1977).

When they do not visit the school, parents may be perceived by teachers as disinterested, or ‘not good’ parents (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001). The interview data also indicates the difficulty the school may experience in identifying and resourcing the complex range of communication needs within the community. Applying Bourdieu’s (1977, 1984, 2007), theoretical framework to the data revealed the complex communication needs and interactions of stakeholders in the field (Maton, 2012; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Clearly, communication is predicated on the conditions operating in the field. The interview data suggested that there are only brief opportunities for parents and teachers to communicate with each other, and these opportunities can be further complicated by the number of languages spoken within the community and the specific communication needs across these cultural groups. While communication from the school allows parents who are present to access information and form relationships, there appears to be few opportunities for parents to initiate contact, which only happens during prescribed times. Consequently, there are limited school-generated opportunities for parents to communicate with teachers in the field to activate and demonstrate their capital and habitus (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

**English language proficiency**

As English is the dominant language in the school, proficiency in English impacts strongly on communication and was a substantial point of discussion for all participants. Generally, interactions regarding learning and social development require complex language skills, and parents’ language
proficiency can directly influence their opportunities to gain information and access the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Reay, 1998).

Poor English language proficiency can diminish parents’ confidence and devalue their cultural capital and habitus (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Reay, 1998, 2004). This is particularly the case for mothers in this community, often isolated at home with household responsibilities, as they may experience isolation and have reduced access to networks without adequate language. Furthermore, Reay (1998) identified that CALD mothers may experience a loss of competency as a parent in a new culture due to poor language skills, and reduced opportunity to relate with others. This may occur despite mothers’ efforts to support and advocate for their children’s education at the school.

Mrs Abu-Rahman (SAO) claimed that: ‘You’re privileged if you can speak English’. This proficiency reflects the power and importance associated with the dominant language at the school. Parents identified English language proficiency as an issue that could impact on parents’ involvement (Bourdieu, 1977; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). According to Mrs Phan (P): ‘Some parents can’t share with some other teachers, [i.e. deal with]’. Mrs Ayoob (P) also commented that poor English impacted on parents’ involvement at the school and their confidence to come to school. She suggested:

So نايشوفوا قيمة العلم؟ ‘they [parents] feel very comfortable when they come here, but the only [thing] is they can’t share with some other teachers, because their English is not good enough to talk out.

English language proficiency demonstrates accepted habitus and capital in the school field, and bestows some power and confidence on the users. Parents may suffer the possible loss or reduction of competence and confidence when they were not sufficiently competent with English (Bourdieu, 1977; Reay, 1998, 2004; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). It may be difficult for them to readily discuss complex issues regarding their children’s learning and, at times, they need to use the support of others to translate and interpret. Even when parents have functional English and can relate clearly to peers and teachers and are easily understood, they may not have the language skills to express or explore complex matters. This can present a challenge to their competence and devalue their language skills, cultural capital and habitus (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001).

The English proficiency of parents may have impacted on the number of participants who volunteered to participate in the research and the information they shared. Parents often prefer to communicate without an interpreter as they have more flexibility when communicating independently.
English language proficiency was also a significant issue for the teachers. Mr Tywman (T) noted that: ‘The language barrier can be a problem. Particularly in a school like this, language is a problem. It is more challenging to communicate.’ This may because he was uncomfortable about not being able to readily develop a relationship with parents, or due to a sense of reduced power when he could not understand parents easily or when he could not be understood, or when communication required an interpreter.

Teachers also made suggestions for overcoming this challenge by using resources available at the school. Mrs Taylor (T) explained that: ‘Parents want to talk to me every day and they will go to English classes because the classes are at the school’. Mrs Tuieti (T) noted: ‘I remind parents about the English classes. Though sometimes it’s not that they can’t speak English, they’re not confident. So it’s good to speak slower sometimes.’ Attendance at English classes, using interpreters and translating information, were all recommended by these teachers. While all teacher participants understood the importance of English proficiency, they did not see the lack of English as an insurmountable problem, but rather saw it as something that could be addressed. While the teachers made positive suggestions of ways to address the communication needs of parents, their comments suggest that they appeared to lack sensitivity to parents’ experiences and to parents’ lack of power or that parents had a reduced value in terms of their cultural capital (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lopez et al., 2001).

The students interviewed also identified that it was important for parents to be able and confident in English. Aditya, (S) noted: ‘Some parents don’t know English that much and they need to know – they can go to classes and learn how they could talk English’. Aditya’s observation, similar to the teachers’ responses, readily suggests a solution, but does not acknowledge the challenge for parents in acquiring a new language in order to demonstrate their cultural capital and habitus through proficient use of English (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

As stated earlier, Jasmine, from a community organisation, suggested that the school needed to: ‘make an effort to support parents’ communication needs’ including:

identifying parents’ communication needs and the use of technology and incorporating Facebook as many parents don’t have the confidence to come and speak to teachers or the principal.

While the school has made some efforts to support the development and display of parents’ English language proficiency through English language classes and the use of interpreters, parents still report loss of confidence due to a lack of language proficiency and diminished access to others in the field (Bourdieu, 1977; Reay, 1998, 2004; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). More than this, language is also
an example of cultural capital and, while some school practices attempted to accommodate for all cultures and languages, English is the dominant language and hence usage of English displays cultural capital valued in the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

The formation of relationships

The importance of forming interpersonal relationships and making connections with others emerged as a significant theme throughout the interviews, particularly from teacher participants. The teachers’ rationale for developing a relationship may vary from seeking respect or compliance to wanting a positive connection, or demonstrating their power (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). While this theme is associated with both communication and English proficiency, the discussion on forming relationships focused predominantly on the impact positive relationships had on parents’ comfort at the school, and reflected the value of building social capital in the field. Developing relationships with both teachers and other parents provided opportunities for parents to activate and demonstrate both cultural and social capital. Yet, the development of these relationships required time, being at school and being in possession of suitable language skills. It takes appropriate capital to build further capital in the field (Bourdieu, 1977; Crozier, 1999, 2001; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Reay, 1998, 2004).

As noted earlier, the parents interviewed had easy access to the teachers and each other as they frequently attended school, developing social capital and acquiring information through these relationships. Mrs Phan, (P) noted: ‘Every morning, ... I want to talk a little bit, about two or three minutes, to my son’s teacher. She is very happy to answer whatever I ask her’. While Mrs Delic (P) reported: ‘The staff is very helpful if you ask any question. They are very polite. They come to you and say, okay what is your question? How can I help you?’ Parents from the same cultural groups had opportunity to form relationships and it was possible for teachers who spoke community languages to easily form relationships with parents. As identified earlier, Mrs Phan reported she would: ‘come to school to be with friends and have fun’, and also to make ‘friendships with the teachers’. Clearly, the school field provided an opportunity to create social networks for the parents present in the field.

The teachers supported the views of parents, noting that forming relationships was important to parent involvement and student learning. Miss El Masri (T) indicated she:

loved spending so much time talking to the parents. I think before I can ask them to be involved, before I can talk to them, I’ve got to build a relationship with them. I do that at the start of the year. I remember little things and I build that relationship first. Then they respect me more.
This response signals the importance of social capital and of building reciprocal relationships in this field. Mr Tywman (T) referred to the ongoing relationship between the parent and teacher noting: ‘we are constantly working together to help the students to learn together’. As a new teacher to the school, Mr Twyman’s comment also reflected an understanding of the importance of building his social capital in this new field.

As noted earlier, the students Zehra, Terina and Aditya all stated that it was important for their teacher to know their parents. Zehra commented that it ‘was important for her parents to come to school so they can see what their children are doing … and make their knowledge better’. Terina also noted: ‘parents come up to school to know what I’m doing in class’. This suggests that the students are interested in making connections between home and school and indicates the generally positive relationship they have with their teachers (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). It may also indicate that students were aware of building the cultural capital of their families (Bourdieu, 1977; Webb, Schirato & Danaher, 2002). However, parents need to be in the field to build cultural capital valued by the field. Mohammoud reflected an understanding of the complexity of building relationships in this field: ‘Mum usually comes to interviews but she can’t come now because I have a male teacher. Now dad will have to leave work and come’. While this gender-based complexity was not discussed by other participants, this student’s reflection shows his knowledge of how cultural expectations impact on his family and the formation of relationships in this field. This comment provides a striking example of the intersection of culture and gender in the school field and their impact on the acquisition and display of capital and power (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Reay, 1998, 2004). Mohammoud’s comment also highlights the position in which women are often placed due to gendered expectations (Reay, 1998) as it may be considered culturally inappropriate for a mother to have a one-to-one conversation with a male teacher even in a busy school hall. This comment again highlights the complexity of communication in a multicultural environment and children’s responsibility to facilitate communication.

Mrs Abu-Rahman (SAO) spoke of relationships she had observed operating in the school. She noted:

    Basically I know a lot of the teachers have a really good connection with the parents. They’re really nice to them. Then sometimes teachers can help parents do wonderful things.

Mrs Abu-Rahman’s comments demonstrate a valuing of social capital and an understanding of how relationships are formed with parents in this field by making time and being approachable. At the same time, her comment can suggest a deficit framing of parents who require guidance from the school to be effective parents. One community partner, Joan, stated that ‘parent involvement was all about relationships’, and Jasmine (C) suggested that the school needed to ‘create a friendly
atmosphere and the leader needs to be visible and available to parents and also to listen to what they want and show them that if they have concern that has been acted on’ (Jeynes, 2011). Jasmine’s comment highlights the role of the principal in supporting the development of parent involvement and relationships in the school field.

While the formation of interpersonal relationships was identified as important to parent involvement, it is also a vehicle to demonstrate and build capital in the field. However, it appears that most relationships were predicated on an unequal power base, with teachers holding greater power at the school (Baquedano-López et al., 2003; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). For parents who did not visit the school, building these relationships was difficult as the traditional paper-based communication provided by the school offered little capacity to support relationships.

**Requiring information about the school, the curriculum and community resources**

The need for information about the school, the curriculum and the resources available in the community emerged as an important theme, particularly for parents. This included knowledge of culturally-specific resources, such as cultural organisations and the services they offered. Such needs reflect settlement issues and the priorities of many refugees, new migrants or people new to an area seeking support and attempting to understand a different social system (Cardona et al., 2009). Teachers supported the priority identified by parents of accessing information and also referred to the benefits of parents knowing what is happening in the classroom.

Parents indicated they were aware of how important it was for them to understand how school works and to know the content of the curriculum. This knowledge allowed them to support their children, build cultural capital and display their interest and skill as parents (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007). Following a parent workshop Mrs Chopra (P) said: ‘it was good to see how a child was learning in class and take that learning home and use it’. Mrs Delic (P) commented that she ‘learnt English grammar from a reading workshop that teachers had presented’.

Mrs Taylor (T) remarked that parents like to be ‘invited to come and sit in the class as they have little idea of how we work’. Parents who seek additional information about the school and curriculum may also be seen as being more interested in their children’s learning (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). Only one teacher, Mr Tywman (T), identified that teachers may also require information. He mentioned needing ‘more information about the parents and their cultural backgrounds to ensure my behaviour is culturally appropriate’. At the time of the interviews, Mr Tywman had not attended any cultural
workshops for staff. Mr Tywman’s comment draws attention to the reciprocal learning that can operate in the school field, where teachers can be informed by parents and pupils. As informants, the parents and pupils would hold power in the field and acquire cultural capital. However, this reciprocity is rarely acknowledged in this school field (Moll et al., 1992).

Mrs Kata (T) acknowledged the power and cultural capital parents’ possess. She pointed out that the parents had knowledge and many resources that they may wish to share with the school community and noted:

I think it’s good to acknowledge people’s backgrounds and what their work experiences are, so they’re not just a parent – that they bring some other things. We have parents who help with dance and library; it’s good for the community.

This was a reminder of the contribution made by parents to the everyday operation and culture of the school, and the acknowledgement, by the teaching staff, of the cultural capital parents could and already do display in the school field (Moll et al., 1992). The acknowledgement of parents’ existing skills and interests suggested a level of respect for parents and also a redistribution of power away from school staff to parents. It is important to note, however, that this acknowledgement was made in response to the parents’ requests for information that was valued by the school (Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

As has been noted earlier, students were aware that parents wanted to know what they did in class; not just the content but also how their learning was structured. As knowledge is powerful in this field, knowledge of resources is valuable. Terina (S) commented:

I think it’s important for parents to know what I do at school because when you’re at home you can ask your parents about it because they know what you’re doing at school.

Aditya (S) agreed that it was useful: ‘for parents to know what was happening in class’.

Joan (C) supported Mrs Kata’s (T) recommendation that the school seek parents’ help as ‘resources’, noting that:

many of the parents are highly skilled and have professional training in a range of areas [but] their qualifications that are not recognised in Australia … we could use the richness that we have in our community.

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24 This is discussed further in Professional Practice Initiative 3.
This is added acknowledgement of the habitus and cultural capital of the families and what they bring to the field (Moll et al., 1992). Joan’s comment is also an identification of how the school can acknowledge parents’ work and skills.

Mrs Abu-Rahman (SAO) stated that the parents:

are so clever and so switched on. We, as people, have to respect that. They like to come and ask you questions – they want more information about their children’s learning.

This comment reflects an acknowledgement of the parents’ cultural capital and their capacity to build capital through acquiring more information from the school. This comment also indicates parents understand that learning is important in this field and are acquiring further learning to build their family’s cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986).

Accessing information about the school, the curriculum and community resources was clearly important for parents as it promoted their cultural capital and allowed them to build habitus valued in the field. The interview responses also demonstrated the amount of information parents brought to the field and the possibility of reciprocal learning (Moll et al., 1992). Again, while the school made some efforts to support parents in the area of accessing information, these efforts appeared inadequate and a broader array of mechanisms is required. As noted in PPI 1, despite a school’s best intention, it may not be possible to cater for the needs of all parents.

Limitations to current practice at Norton PS

The international research identifies that barriers to parent involvement are a significant issue for parents, particularly those from a CALD background, and that these barriers are often a form of structural discrimination (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). While limitations to parent involvement were identified by both parents and teachers at Norton PS, both parties experienced these barriers in different ways. Significantly, parents made multiple references across the data to a range of barriers they faced at the school. These included the difficulties they experienced accessing the school when their children started at a new school, as identified earlier by Mrs Fifita and Mrs Markov, or having their efforts to be in the school field accepted. Lack of confidence or poor competency in English also operated as a barrier to some parents. Generally, these barriers were identified by parent participants as reasons some parents were not visible at school.

As noted earlier, teachers’ comments regarding limitations to parent involvement were generally paired with a suggestion of a way to overcome the problem with school resources. This attitude, a willingness to offer solutions, may be a reflection of the efforts made by the school to develop
effective parent-involvement practices. However, it may also be seen as a lack of understanding by the teachers of the obstacles parents experience when attempting to support their children’s learning. In addition to identifying the limitations with English language, teachers noted that more flexibility and accommodation was required in arranging times for meetings and workshops to suit parents’ hours, as these were generally held during the day when working parents could not attend. Interestingly, Mr Tywman (T) commented: ‘Because our hours – nine to three – are not family-friendly, working-friendly, to somebody who is working, it’s very, very difficult for them, to take leave and participate’.

The doxa operating in the field also impacts on parents’ involvement. The doxa that teachers are the best informed about student learning can be disenfranchising to parents. While this may not be the view of all the teaching staff, simply by working within the school structures and by not questioning the doxa, all teachers may appear to be (even if unintended) supporters of the status quo (Deer, 2012). This may place teachers and parents in a binary position, in opposition, rather than as potential partners sharing learning responsibility. This doxa, however, was not fully supported by all staff. Ms Stevens (T) and Miss El Masri (T) noted the importance of connecting learning at home with learning at school, acknowledging that both teachers and parents have a role in student learning, rather than presenting a superior view of school learning (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). Such inclusive views have the capacity to challenge the status quo that currently operates and presents an alternative position where parents and teachers both have knowledge of student learning rather than presenting a barrier to parents.

Students appeared cognisant of the cultural barriers that operate between home and school and that impact on parent involvement. This was demonstrated by Mohammoud’s (S) comment, discussed earlier, that it would be inappropriate for his mother to attend an interview alone with a male teacher, and his father would need to take time off work to attend. Mrs Abu-Rahman (SAO) considered that despite the range of strategies the school had, there were more things that could be done to better accommodate the parents’ range of interests and needs. She stated:

I’d probably just have more activities that would suit our parents who don’t have a lot of time or I’d make up groups that are from the same culture.

Equally important, Jasmine (C) suggested that: ‘parent concerns needed to be acted on and this helps parents be confident in the school’. Many parent concerns may not have been identified without this analysis. These concerns include the inflexible structure of the school that limits opportunities of parents and teachers to connect, and the limited school practices that dictate expected behaviours of parents (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Such practices are forms
of structural discrimination and operate as ‘accepted practice’ (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). These can lead to cultural reproduction of discrimination if not addressed through a change of procedure.

In addition to the matters identified above, Mrs Ayoob (P) thought that more parents should be involved, and that the parents who were involved could do more. She commented on why parents may not be more involved:

“Yeah...”

Yeah, it could be because the parents come from another culture or other language or they don’t have enough English. They think education not important or they leave education to the school. We don’t know what the problem is.

This suggestion reflects a normative view of parent involvement that is principally enacted in the school field; ignoring parents as a child’s first teacher and the range of things parents do in their homes to support their children’s learning. Clearly, learning can occur in compatible environments yet there is little acknowledgement of differing styles and degrees of parent involvement reflected in interview responses (Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009; Weiss et al., 2009).

The above information suggests that parent involvement in the form of parents’ home-based work can be better acknowledged in the school. This would include recognising parents’ work in preparing their children for school, completion of homework and ensuring children are at school on time. While noting these activities may appear minor, they symbolise acknowledgement of parents’ work, their cultural capital and the connection between home and school (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999).

There is a culture of welcoming and sustaining parent involvement in this school (as outlined in PPI 1) evidenced by both the strategies and programs for parent involvement. Yet it is clear from the data that limitations remain to the operation of parent involvement and to parents’ easy access to the school. This presents a significant challenge to the school as some of these weaknesses and discriminatory practices may be overlooked, in which case discriminatory practices will continue.

Discussion

All stakeholders interviewed indicated that parent involvement is valued in the Norton PS community. They recognised that it has the capacity to support student learning and create cohesion in the community (Auerbach 2007, 2009; Epstein, 1986, 1995). Hearing the experiences of members
of the school field speaking in their own voices was significant to developing an understanding of the impact of parent involvement on different stakeholders. These responses, considered from a Bourdieusian perspective, provide an understanding of both the community’s experiences and an unmasking of how parent involvement operates in this school field. This examination of participants’ responses also revealed the way their cultural capital and habitus impacted on their power at Norton PS. The power that participants had or did not have influences their communication with others, the relationships they form at the school and importantly, their opportunities to be acknowledged and build further power. While these experiences hold for all stakeholders interviewed, they appear strongest for parents who access the field.

This analysis has also facilitated the identification of procedures and behaviours that support parent involvement and those that restrict it thus reinforcing cultural and structural discrimination at Norton PS (Lamont & Lareau, 1988). Many practices restricting parent involvement could continue undisturbed without this analysis (Maton, 2012; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). The practices that supported parent involvement, possibly challenging restrictive school systems, include: communication protocols; opportunities for parents to learn or develop their English proficiency; the formation of relationships; and access to information about the school, the curriculum and the community. While the practices that support cultural reproduction and limit the location and the role of CALD parents at the school, as suggested by the interview data, are the inflexible structure of the school; the limited school practices and the actions of the staff in supporting a narrow role for parents (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). The identification of restrictive practices is the first step in addressing unhelpful practice.

It is important to recognise that matters not discussed during interviews may also impact on the operation of parent involvement in the school. Information not identified during focus groups or interviews, but articulated in the parent-involvement research, included the benefits and importance of two-way communication between parents and school staff (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Reay, 1998). This is significant as parents have few opportunities to initiate communication at the school, as demonstrated by the data. A further issue that cannot be ignored in this study is what was not said which can inform a discussion as much as what is said. The parents who participated in the study are often present at the school and hence visible in the school field. These parents, while they are reflective of the cultural composition of the school community, represent only two per cent of the parent body. Hence, there are many parents whose ideas, concerns and experiences were not heard and therefore not considered in the analysis. This voice, the ‘voice of the silent’ is present in this doctoral research as the voices of all the community were not included (Lawson, 2003). This silence is further complicated by the challenge that may be
experienced by parents who are unable to voice their concerns due to limited English, lack of confidence or not feeling welcome at the school (Cardona et al., 2009). Similarly, the teachers who participated in the study volunteered, hence, the voices and other teachers’ points of view have not been considered. Clearly, the school needs to make more effort to hear a broader range of voices and identify the range of views across the school community or develop the skill to note what is not said.

**Opportunities and promising practices**

This PPI was informed by four research questions. In what follows I summarise findings from the interviews in relation to these questions. Regarding the purpose of parent involvement, it appears that, while parent involvement is endorsed by the community as valuable, the purpose/s are yet to be identified by the school community. Regarding the second question, the school can effectively involve parents in their children’s school-based learning by creating valid opportunities for parents to be at school. The data suggests this can be done by identifying parents’ needs, including communication, providing opportunities for them to form relationships, developing their English language proficiency and providing access information about the school. The third issue to resolve was to identify how school structures impact on parent involvement. This is a critical finding of this PPI and promises to have the greatest impact on the ongoing development of parent involvement at the school. Up to this point, barriers to parent involvement have been considered complexities that the school needed to address, yet the data analysis clearly identified that there are barriers in the school that restrict parents’ involvement in their children’s learning. The barriers identified include the limited school practices that could cater for the parents’ needs, the inflexible structure of the school and the actions of the staff in supporting a narrow role for parents (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Addressing school-based barriers appears an obvious place to focus further development of parent involvement and could be done by seeking further specific information from the community on ways to redress this inflexibility and the limited practices. Finally, this PPI sought to identify the assistance teachers require to support parent involvement. Based on the responses from teachers during interviews, it appears that teachers have a limited appreciation of firstly the impact of their position on parents, and secondly their capacity to promote relationships and acknowledge parents’ capital. Furthermore, the analysis suggests that the teaching staff require two forms of support: teacher professional learning and increased organisational support. At a practical level, the school needs to provide specific times and opportunities for teachers to be available to communicate with parents and exchange information together about student learning. Teacher professional learning is required to explore teachers’ roles in parent involvement and develop
communication skills to support this. By seeking continued direction from the community on parent involvement, it would be possible to develop culturally-appropriate programs.

Providing opportunities for parents to activate habitus and demonstrate their cultural capital remains complex. Yet given the complexity of functioning in a ‘new field’ and identifying and developing cultural capital, the strategies developed at Norton PS may be simple responses to complex problems and fail to offer adequate support for all CALD parents. The ‘new field’ is not only the school or education for these families, it is generally a new country and culture that presents a complex array of demands (Cardona et al., 2009). Even in a field that is fundamentally welcoming, parents need to be aware of the ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010) to have the skills to enter the field (Lareau & Weininger, 2003) and have the opportunity to build cultural capital and activate habitus of value in this field (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). The analysis of data at Norton PS suggests that some opportunities exist for parents within a largely inflexible sub-field of education, yet it appears that while practices that support cultural reproduction are challenged, they are not disturbed (Bourdieu, 2007; Thomson & Holdsworth, 2003). While the practices at Norton PS may be considered promising, further work is required at the school to ensure that they support the parents in the field and are not simply generic practices based on habit (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013).

Significantly, this analysis has highlighted the importance of leadership in the operation of parent involvement in a CALD community. This will be investigated in the next section of this professional doctorate, with the intention of identifying further practices to support the reconceptualisation of parent involvement in a CALD community.
Scholarly Paper 3 (SP 3)

Leadership for a Culturally and Linguistically Diverse School Community

Over the last thirty years extensive international research interest has been directed toward school leadership and its potential to impact on student learning outcomes. Current research on school leadership has largely focused on styles of leadership, in particular: educational leadership (Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009; Waters et al., 2003); transformational leadership; and distributed leadership (Harris, 2003, 2004; Spillane et al., 2001). Leadership sustainability has also been explored, together with a focus on identifying useful leadership skills, knowledge and understanding that might be acquired or developed in order to build and capitalise on past learning (Fullan, 2004, 2010, 2011). More recently, scholarship on leadership for social justice, focused on equal opportunity and equity of access for all students has been growing in response to the increase in cultural diversity in many communities (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010; Larson & Murtadha; 2002; McIver Kearns, Lyons, & Sussman, 2009; Theoharis, 2009). An area that to date has received little attention, is educational leadership for a multicultural community. Regardless of the specific focus of the research, the primary purpose of educational leadership is generally identified as reform, change or improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006). This paper seeks to identify research-based findings regarding educational-leadership practices that support parent involvement for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) parents within a multicultural school community. Specifically the aim of this scholarly paper is to identify processes, structures, understanding and insights used by school leaders to support the members of a multicultural school to ensure social cohesion and enhanced student outcomes. In order to do this, this paper draws together diverse research literature on educational leadership, parent involvement and parent involvement for a CALD community.

The growth of interest in educational leadership has been tied to three main factors: greater system decentralisation and increased accountability at an individual school level (Leithwood et al., 2006); the increase in the rights of parents for information; and the identification of the critical link between leadership and learning (Robinson, 2007; Mutch & Collins, 2012). It is the role of the leader (principal) to balance external pressures such as national testing, government-defined curriculum and established learning practices with the specific needs of the students in a CALD school environment. Furthermore, educational leadership has become a fundamental element in a broad ranging debate regarding the specific role leadership plays in school improvement and school effectiveness (Hattie, 2009). In the Australian context, this interest has been further influenced by
what has been identified as an aging workforce occupying senior leadership positions in schools (Starr, 2009; Riley, 2011) and the need to prepare future leaders in a context that appears to lack adequate formal leadership-preparation programs (Starr, 2009; Matthews, Moorman & Nusche, 2007). The importance placed on educational leadership is confirmed by the number of investigations that have been conducted internationally over the last thirty years, in the United Kingdom (Leithwood et al., 2006), the United States (Elmore, 2009; Waters, Marzano & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood, 2005), Canada (Fullan, 2002, 2004, 2010, 2011; Hargreaves & Fink, 2004), New Zealand (Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009; Timperley, 2005) and Australia (Blackmore, 2010; Caldwell, 2006; Matthews, Moorman & Nusche, 2007). Efforts to identify the key elements of successful educational leadership have led to similar findings on the role of leadership emerging from different educational systems including Canada, the United Kingdom and the United States (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Leithwood et al., 2006).

While a range of claims regarding the importance of educational leadership have been made across these studies, findings consistently point to a direct link between effective school leadership and enhanced student outcomes (Day et al., 2009; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). This is of particular significance in an environment where external testing carries increased weight, with the results reflecting on both the community and the education system (Day et al., 2009). The role of the leader is critical in mediating such external pressures as testing, student curriculum and maintaining focus on building a successful school culture rather than pursuing narrow short-term goals that may appear to meet external demands yet fail to meet the needs of students (Larson & Murtadha; 2002).

While much attention has focused on educational leadership, there appears to be a significant gap in the literature on the relationship between principals (leaders) and parents, and the work of leaders in facilitating parent involvement (Auerbach, 2009; Griffith, 2000; Horvat et al., 2010). This relationship between parents, a child’s first teacher and leaders responsible for facilitating effective school education, is a critical one (Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 1986, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002). A relationship, predicated on power and in many cases also influenced by race and class, requires specific attention that can lead to improved outcomes for students. This relationship is therefore understood as being an important leadership responsibility (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Crozier & Davies 2007; Reay, 1998). Research suggests that when principals are welcoming to parents, when they communicate frequently and are respectful, parents are generally more interested in being at the school and becoming involved with the school (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Jeynes, 2011; Turney & Kao, 2009). As has been indicated, (PPI 1) parent involvement in their children’s school-based education can lead to a range of positive student outcomes (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Desforges &
Abouchaar, 2003; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Weiss et al., 2009) and can also lead to the enhancement of social benefits for the community (Auerbach, 2007).

This paper on leadership for a CALD community is divided into five sections. The first section considers contemporary educational leadership. The second section explores contemporary school leadership in action and provides a definition of school leadership to be used in this section. This is followed in section three by an investigation of the gaps and weaknesses of the research. The fourth section considers the value of leadership for parent involvement. The implications of the findings are discussed in the last section with a view to highlighting possible practice for leadership of parent involvement for a multicultural community. The review will identify the specific leadership skills required to support the relationship between parents, teachers and students, and consider the leadership skills required to address the needs of parents and students from a CALD background.

**Contemporary educational leadership**

The context framing educational leadership is complex and generally informed by socio-political expectations operating at a school level, community level, and within a broader systems context, both state and national. For example the Australian Institute of Teachers and School Leaders (AITSL) assert that leaders require strong interpersonal and social skills, understanding and knowledge based on pedagogy and a clear personal values base in order to meet the demands of the environment of any school (AITSL, 2010). At times presented as heroic (Robinson, 2007), principals need to develop professional practice based on knowledge of pedagogy, ability to lead a culture of improvement and build relationships in and beyond the school (AITSL, 2011). The above abilities are minimum requirements for principals to lead and manage their school, and to ensure equity and improved student learning outcomes.

There have been significant changes in the nature of school leadership over recent years with leaders needing to respond to a vast number of cultural, educational and economic developments. Internationally, schools are identified as complex organisations facing great social demands and expectations at a systems level, as well as from their community and parents (Leithwood et al., 2006). In their recent report for the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) on Building Leadership Capacity, Matthews et al. (2007) highlighted the magnitude of the change leaders currently face and the deep complexity of the role.

School leaders’ roles have changed from practising teachers with added responsibilities to full-time professional managers of human, financial and other resources accountable for their results. This has meant that more and more tasks

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25 See Scholarly Paper 2 for more information on the operation and impact of expectations.
have been added to the job description: instructional leadership, staff evaluation, budget management, performance assessment, accountability, and community relations, to name some of the most prominent ones. In this environment, the range of knowledge and skills that effective school leaders need today is daunting: curricular, pedagogical, student and adult learning in addition to managerial and financial skills, abilities in group dynamics, interpersonal relations and communications. (2007, p. 5)

McIver et al. (2009), in their report on leadership, recommend that the role of the principal be redeveloped to include a stronger focus on student learning and instructional matters, and less focus on administrative responsibilities (including building maintenance and financial management). Further, McIver et al. (2009) claim that, with a more focused role, it may be possible for principals to meet the challenges of both leading and maintaining a central role as instructional leaders and ensuring improved student outcomes.

**Contemporary school leadership in action**

Meta-analyses of leadership by Day et al. (2009), Robinson (2007) and Waters et al. (2003) explored the complexity of the construct ‘leadership’. Day et al. (2009) refer to ten strong claims about leadership, which they refer to as practices that encompass vision, teaching and curriculum, and the quality of teaching and learning. Robinson (2007) identifies five leadership dimensions which include goal setting and participating in teaching and learning. Waters et al. (2003) suggest twenty one ‘principal leadership’ responsibilities formed by sixty-six leadership practices which they refer to as a ‘balanced framework’. This framework includes the work of leaders and teachers, and also covers a decision-making process. These meta-analyses appear to provide a concise overview of critical and essential leadership practices. However, analysis of these studies makes apparent the extent to which each dimension, core practice or leadership responsibility refers to a complex response to the learning context; a response that requires a collection of sophisticated educational skills, knowledge and understanding to be performed successfully.

Despite the amount of research conducted on educational leadership, there are no clear definitions that describe this multifaceted task perhaps for good reason. According to Robinson (2007), leadership is a complex, abstract notion which is generally constructed in response to the environment. Leadership is most commonly identified as dimensions (Robinson, 2007), qualities, skills and knowledge (Day et al., 2009), or the ability to know what to do, when and how (Elmore, 2009; Waters et al., 2003). The complexity of the task and the range of environments in which leaders operate, results in the concept being difficult to define. For Waters et al. (2003), leadership is not only knowledge, skills or understanding, ‘it is the ability to interact and motivate others in a community to act together for a shared goal’ (p. 8).
Given that leadership is clearly a complex multifaceted concept, I suggest there are core responsibilities associated with leadership that the principal performs to manage and lead a school. These responsibilities include all matters related to learning, safety, finance, curriculum, staffing and community. Hence, for the purposes of this paper, educational leadership is considered to be an interactive process whereby a leader responds to the demands of the learning environment and uses knowledge, skills and understanding to support, direct and inspire learning for all members of the school community. While this complex task is not the sole responsibility of one person, the responsibility does lie with the principal to develop effective, distributed leadership strategies to ensure appropriate, responsive leadership (Day et al., 2009; Harris, 2003, 2004: Spillane et al., 2001; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003).

Day et al. (2009) Robinson (2007) and Waters et al. (2003) draw on research that uses the explicit experiences of leaders in the field (Hargreaves & Fink, 2004; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012; Fullan, 2004, 2010, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson et al., 2009). These studies have all attempted to identify what it is school leaders actually do and to describe these actions as core leadership practices, dimensions or responsibilities. These particular studies have been selected as they specifically investigate the impact of leadership on student outcomes. Clearly, this is important to all schools and is of particular importance to this professional doctorate, as the students at Norton PS were performing below national average according to NAPLAN (National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy) at the beginning of the study.

Based on the results of a three-year research project focused on schools demonstrating improved student learning outcomes, Day et al. (2009) identified that successful leaders have a comprehensive view of leadership that focuses on students, staff and the school’s contribution to the broader community. Their findings suggest that successful leaders express and drive vision based on their values, and that this leads to expectations, directions and trust. These findings also indicate that successful leaders enhance the quality and reshape teaching and learning. Such leaders enrich the curriculum and enhance teacher quality, restructure parts of the organisation, redesign leadership roles and responsibilities, build internal collaboration and build relationships outside the organisation. They note that while the order and timing of these strategies varies across school settings, these areas of focus are shared across the actions of successful leaders. Based on their analysis, Day et al. (2009) have suggested that successful leadership operates over three broad phases: early, middle and later or enrichment phase, during which time leaders distribute leadership progressively with their teams as trust develops. They suggest that there is no single, best-fit approach to leadership, as the contexts of schools vary greatly. As the task of leading a school is

26 This was noted in the narrative.
complex and generally requires leaders to participate in a lengthy apprenticeship (Lingard & Christie, 2003), Day et al. (2009) have suggested leaders of successful schools also require support in the form of a tailored professional development program. Such programs provide the opportunity for aspiring or early career leaders to explore areas that challenge and build capacity in developing school-based diagnostic skills and judgement (Day et al., 2009).

The meta-analysis of school leadership conducted by Robinson (2007) refers to five leadership dimensions based specifically on the impact of leadership behaviour on students’ social and academic outcomes. Based on the findings from twenty six studies, Robinson (2007) suggests that the closer the leader is to the core business of teaching and learning (pedagogy and how it is enacted in a particular environment), the greater the opportunity for the leader to make a difference. Yet, traditionally there has been a clear separation between school leadership on the one hand and teaching and learning on the other, with limited connections between leadership guided by pedagogy (Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). Robinson states that successful teachers are generally promoted away from teaching and learning into more administrative roles. Interestingly, there is some indication that the further staff move from the core task of teaching, the more their dissatisfaction increases, especially if responsibilities are perceived as extrinsic to teaching and learning (Mulford, 2007).

The five leadership dimensions identified by Robinson (2007) also reflect the findings of both Day et al. (2009) and Waters et al. (2003). These claims are:

1. establishing goals and expectations
2. developing strategic resourcing
3. planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
4. promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
5. ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

Each area of leadership is identified as a ‘dimension’ that reflects the density and complexity of the areas of leadership. Each dimension refers to a complex web of actions, knowledge, skills and insights that together support the core business of the school: student learning. Yet, Robinson (2007) is cautious regarding the limitations of these findings, as each dimension is both abstract and complex. She suggests that the exact element being measured remains vague. While the dimensions of leadership Robinson identifies are drawn from an extensive review of research – and identify pattern of behaviours from school leaders – Robinson’s warning is warranted, as each school represents an intricate constellation of variables. These variables include a range of students of differing ages, skill, experiences and cultural backgrounds, from a variety of families, taught by
teachers with an equally broad range of skills, experience and backgrounds, operating in a unique social setting, the school, that draws on an array of resources to support the needs of the context.

Clearly the challenge for leaders lies in their skill to identify the why, what, how and when of leadership (Waters et al., 2003); or as Robinson (2007) suggests, the challenge for professionals is often knowing what ways to interpret, adjust and adopt research findings to develop solutions or programs suited to their own setting. Here, leaders may require direct support through practical examples, theoretical explanations or mentoring due to the range of variation in school environments.

Waters et al. (2003) analysed 30 years of quantitative research on leadership, covering a total of 70 studies. This was augmented with the project team’s extensive professional experience in school leadership. These two areas are combined to form the Balanced Leadership Framework. This framework identifies specific knowledge, skills, strategies and tools school leaders can use to make a positive impact on student learning. Through this analysis, Waters et al. (2003) identified 21 leadership responsibilities formed by sixty-six leadership practices that directly correlate with student achievement. They also articulate the specific skills and strategies leaders require. These 21 leadership responsibilities cover: the importance of vision, values and beliefs; knowledge of teaching and the curriculum; ability to motivate, support and reward staff; and the responsible management of resources. Waters et al. (2003) have also interpreted these responsibilities and practices via a ‘knowledge taxonomy’ that categorises the leadership research literature into four areas of knowledge; what to do and why the action is important, how to lead and when leadership actions should be taken. The Balanced Leadership Framework also considers the impact and possible scale of change required at a specific time in order to support leaders to identify actions that will lead to the desired outcome. The goal of this framework is to support leaders to employ effective strategies at different stages of their tenure, according to their specific needs as dictated by context. In theory, the Balanced Leadership Framework might be understood as a valuable tool for school leaders to ensure they balance their knowledge, skills and strategies to make the best choice that leads to the right change (Lingard & Christie, 2003). However, given that leadership in action is so complex, a framework, even a comprehensive one, may offer assistance, but not certainty, to the complex task of meeting the leadership demands of each unique school context. Waters et al. (2003) also note that poor or inappropriate leadership causes a negative effect on student performance, and indeed, on the entire culture of the school.

Despite this broad interest in leadership, studies on educational leadership have generally occurred in isolation from broader leadership research and understanding drawn from other fields such as
business. An exception to this is the work of Fullan (2004, 2010, 2011). Drawing strongly on business management research, Fullan (2011) has used a different paradigm throughout his research on educational leadership and its impact on student outcomes and school improvement. Fullan (2011) has drawn theoretical insights from successful business leaders and integrated these findings into his research in schools and with school systems, focusing on sustained improvement. He recommends school leaders use similar leadership behaviours to those used by leaders in business to make a difference to student outcomes in schools. Fullan (2011) encourages school leaders to clarify their goals and purpose, to motivate staff to share the goals and resolutely adhere to them. He also encourages leaders to collaborate and learn with staff, measure outcomes and respond to their findings. Fullan (2011) emphasises practice-driven theory, suggesting leaders need to respond to their context and avoid being locked into current practices if these are not supporting learning in the organisation. Rather, he recommends that principals develop theory that supports their organisation and its goals.

Despite the extensive amount of research conducted on educational leadership and the importance placed on the impact of context on this work, it is surprising that only limited attention has been given to the importance of leading parent involvement. This is a significant omission that this professional doctorate seeks to address.

Gaps and weaknesses

There is considerable agreement across the research regarding the core responsibilities of educational leaders. As reported in the three meta-analyses, these generally reflect a comprehensive range of responsibilities including: guiding and shaping the curriculum; ensuring quality teaching and learning; establishing goals, values and beliefs; motivating, supporting and rewarding staff; and managing resources. While these meta-analyses depict the complexity of the role, they also appear to have conceptualised the role of school leaders rather narrowly (Day et al., 2009; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003), as leadership tends to be viewed throughout these meta-analyses as scholarship and research, rather than as scholarship and a field of practice (Lingard & Christie, 2003). As these analyses are built on research and, as has been noted earlier, principals often face challenges in interpreting research into action in their own setting, it would be valuable for principals to have access to a range of examples of practice in different school fields that include theoretical explanations within the research (Robinson, 2007).

While school leadership is clearly a complex construct, there appears to be a number of considerations critical to school leadership that have been omitted throughout the international literature or have attracted less research interest. These include: the repetitive yet essential tasks of
leadership; the exploration of the impact of power, gender and diversity on the execution of the leadership role; broader conceptualisation of the leadership role; and the work of leaders in fostering relationships with parents, and with CALD parents in particular.

The repetitive yet essential tasks of leaders overlooked include: budgeting, keeping up with knowledge of new technologies, overseeing building maintenance and repair, and understanding legal matters. Significantly, these are identified by McIver et al. (2009) and Robinson (2007) as suitable tasks to remove from the principal’s role so that principals can increase their focus on student learning. The omission of these responsibilities in the leadership research is understandable, as these matters may be considered management tasks and not leadership. Yet currently, leadership in schools does not solely involve the performance of teaching and learning or heroic deeds. Rather, as Robinson (2007) points out, much of the work of leaders is the routine, repetitive, yet essential tasks that ensure the smooth running of a functional, safe school. Such routine tasks need to be acknowledged as well.

It is surprising, too, that the impact of power on the role of leaders has not been explored in detail. Principals hold the institutionalised power in schools and they are responsible for the interpretation of policy, meeting the demands of both the school system and the community, as well as accounting for student outcomes. The style of leadership, and the way the principal leads and exercises their power, is vital to the effectiveness of the role (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Reay, 1998).27 To support the efficient operation of schools, leaders need to be cognisant of the impact of their power and how their use of power impacts on the relationships that operate in the school environment. These understandings would support all leaders in the execution of their role.

While these three meta-analyses report findings from a range of leadership research studies, it remains surprising that the role and potential of parent involvement on student learning has not become a more significant element of the school leadership debate. As schools are now catering for more culturally-diverse populations, leadership sensitive to the needs of the community will become increasingly important (Freebody et al., 2011; Turney & Koa, 2009). Research that acknowledges this issue, as well as discusses the skills required in fostering parent involvement, is focused on schools in areas with significant CALD populations, low SES communities, or areas that are considered challenging (Muiji, 2004). Such conflation between the needs of the CALD community and those of low SES communities does not adequately recognise or address the specificity of needs of the CALD communities.28 Importantly, according to recent studies on effective schools, the better the parent-involvement culture in the school, the greater the positive effects for the students. These positive

27 See SP 2 for a more detailed discussion of power.
28 This is discussed further in Scholarly Paper 1.
effects include enhanced school culture, more relevant curriculum and improved student behaviour (Auerbach, 2004, Jensen & Sonnemann, 2014). Significantly, the research shows that the positive effects are not dictated by cultural background or SES (Jensen & Sonnemann, 2014; Mutch & Collins, 2012).

What is of surprise, and is of particular interest to this doctoral study, is that working with parents and involving them in student learning is frequently subsumed under working with community involvement, rather than being identified as a distinct responsibility requiring specific leadership skills and knowledge from school leaders. As the relationship between the community and the school is different from the relationship operating between parents and the school, it could be argued that these relations require different insights, understanding and skills from a leader. This appears as a significant gap in the research reviewed thus far. While the studies acknowledge the importance of responding to the context and the needs of the environment, working with parents appears hidden or underplayed. If, as many studies now suggest, parent involvement is critical to student learning and has the potential to impact positively on student outcomes, involving parents is an important yet understated element of leadership (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Weiss et al., 2009).

Leadership of parent involvement

As has been established, in many analyses of educational leadership, the leadership of parent involvement is often understated or not addressed as part of a leader’s responsibility. Auerbach (2009), Griffith (2000) and Horvat, Curci and Partlow, (2010) have claimed that the literature exploring the intersection between parent involvement and leadership remains underdeveloped. It is critical to this discussion of school leadership to identify the specific leadership requirements in terms of parent involvement and ascertain if effective leadership practices or strategies have been identified.

A relatively recent area of focus of school leadership research – the move from an inward focused organisation to an organisation with an outward focus – represents a significant paradigm shift for schools and brings attention to the need for leadership in relation to parent involvement (Auerbach, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Leithwood et al., 2006; Muller, 2009). The research that has been conducted on school leadership responsibilities in relation to parent involvement establishes that it is: an arm of school effectiveness (Horvat et al., 2010); a lever for improved student outcomes (Biddulph et al., 2003); or social justice work generally motivated by a principal’s moral purpose (Auerbach, 2009). Based on a review of New Zealand schools, generally with multicultural communities, Mutch and Collins (2012) identified that effective partnerships lead to better student
outcomes and that leadership is key to the formation of these partnerships. The importance of partnerships with parents and families has also been highlighted in this study.

Though leadership of parent involvement is mentioned in the educational leadership literature, there generally appears to be an assumption that it occurs automatically and is consequently not explored (Day et al., 2009; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). It appears that the principal’s work involving parents, and the place and impact of leadership responsibility to learning, is an area that is contested, especially where the boundaries or responsibilities for learning may be less clear (Macfarlane, 2008). This leadership responsibility may be contested as it stands at the nexus of home and school and requires leaders to clarify the purpose of their role with parents, negotiate this role and collaborate between the stakeholders across both settings (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). Learning that occurs at school is clearly the responsibility of the principal and teachers, while learning that occurs at home is not always recognised or acknowledged as parents’ responsibility. When home learning is acknowledged, it is often perceived as the cause of poor results or failure to learn (Chrispeels, 1996; Mayeske, Okada, & Beaton, 1973; Walberg, 1984). Yet the link between the home learning environment and the school environment is important, as learning can take place in multiple and compatible settings, and is more effective when links between these learning environments are articulated (Robinson, 2007; Weiss et al., 2009).

Though frequently understated, there is an emerging body of international research that supports the benefits of parent involvement in their children’s learning (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Horvat et al., 2010; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson et al., 2009). The leaders’ skills, understanding and knowledge required to support parent involvement have been identified in some current research and are similar to the skills leaders require to operate effective schools (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson et al., 2009). However, the specific leadership considerations identified in separate studies are not combined to form a comprehensive view of what is required from leaders to support parent involvement. For example, various research suggests that effective parent involvement requires educational leaders who understand that engaging with parents makes a difference to student learning (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson et al., 2009), who clarify the purpose of parent involvement supportive of the context (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013) and who drive a vision for involvement and plan for this involvement in collaboration with other members of the school community (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010). To work effectively with their parent community, principals need to employ the same effective leadership practices as they would in other areas of school responsibility, to demonstrate consistent judgement
and maintain focus on outcomes and to evaluate the impact of the work they do with parents (Leithwood et al., 2006).29

In fostering effective parent involvement, leaders also need to be aware of the barriers and challenges parents may face in attempting to be involved in their children’s school.30 The complexity of the barriers parents face need to be clear to leaders so they are cognisant of matters that could impede or constrain their work with parents. These barriers may include teachers not welcoming parents due to a lack of skill in the area (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Jeynes, 2005; McNaughton, 2002) and parents acting combatively. Parents may also form closed groups or cliques and limit their communication with the school, which may further challenge a principal’s work with their parent community (Auerbach, 2009). Another cause can be the lack of space for parent activities or a lack of funds to support this work (Auerbach, 2009).

Significantly, skills, knowledge and understanding associated with the leadership of parent involvement are not dissimilar to those included in the discussion of dimensions, practices or responsibilities of effective leaders in the meta-analyses reviewed earlier in this paper (Day et al., 2009; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). Yet parent involvement was not identified as a key responsibility in any of these analyses. This omission ignores or downplays the strength of parents’ role as their child’s first teacher in the learning process, and therefore downplays the potential and importance of the relationship that could operate between the principal and parents, and connect learning at school with learning at home (Robinson, 2007; Weiss et al., 2009). I suggest that this is due to the fact that parent involvement generally occurs in middle-class areas where little specific organisation is required (Auerbach, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010).31 Further, when it does not occur it is often considered to be the ‘fault’ of the parents and not the lack of leadership at the school (Auerbach, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010). However, parents from CALD backgrounds who may not be aware of how the school system works, and may not recognise the explicit and implicit expectations of parents, would benefit from leadership that supports and encourages their involvement in their children’s school and learning (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009).

**Reasons leadership of parent involvement is overlooked**

As with all elements of leadership, parent-involvement leadership is complex. Inconsistent interest in this element of leadership may be the result of a number of variables. First, although a clear message presented in the literature is the need for leaders to respond to the demands of the environment, it is conceivable that leadership, when it comes to parent involvement, may not be a high priority in all

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29 See Professional Practice Initiative 1 for further discussion on this issue.
30 Scholarly Paper 1 provides a broader discussion on barriers parents may face in their efforts to be involved in their children’s school including limited opportunities and lack of childcare.
31 As discussed in Scholarly Paper 1 parent involvement can vary greatly in different socio-economic groups.
schools. This could be the case where parents may be comfortable in the environment and therefore do not require focused encouragement or support from school leaders to become involved (Auerbach, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2006, Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). In neighbourhoods where there is a strong similarity between the home and school environments, parent involvement may occur with some ease and therefore not require specific leadership (Chrispeels, 1996; Jeynes, 2005; Kim, 2009). Hence, there has been little research interest generated in this area. Second, in other environments, leadership in terms of parent involvement may be challenging for leaders to both integrate into their current repertoire of skills and difficult to implement. This responsibility may create tensions for overburdened leaders (Auerbach, 2009; Flessa, 2008; Horvat et al., 2010). Furthermore, the leadership role that would encourage greater parent involvement is rarely motivation for teachers to become principals (Auerbach, 2009). At the same time, parent-involvement programs may attract little interest from principals in data-driven learning cultures, particularly as the benefits of parent involvement are often indirect and difficult to measure (Auerbach, 2009; Flessa, 2008; Horvat et al., 2010; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson, 2007). While principals may be called to account for their students’ academic results, they are rarely, if ever, called to account for their parent-involvement programs or lack thereof (Flessa, 2008).

As Robinson et al. (2009) suggest, the benefits of parent involvement are indirect and require awareness or appropriate tools to identify the benefits of this work. What is more, the power relationship operating in schools between the principal and parent can create a difficult platform from which to build constructive relationships (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Reay, 1998). As the holder of institutionalised power, the actions of the principal have a significant impact on relationships with parents. Indeed simple actions from the principal may lead to either encouragement of parents’ presence at the school, or a sense of rejection (Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Consequently the principal may be required to negotiate and re-negotiate working relationships with parents to foster and maintain their involvement (Horvat et al., 2010).32

Barriers or challenges may block parents approaching the school and may include inflexibility by schools in the organisation and timetabling of meetings; and inappropriate communications limiting parent involvement (López et al., 2001; Sheldon, 2003).33 When the blocks appear greater than the opportunities or invitations to be present at the school, parents are less likely to feel welcome and hence may elect not to be at the school (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Turney & Kao, 2009). They may instead focus their energy on their home-based parenting (Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003). This is often the case for CALD parents who may face additional obstacles due to their reliance on non-

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32 Refer to Scholarly Paper 2 for a full discussion of the impact of power relationships in schools.
33 The challenges and barriers to parent involvement are discussed in Scholarly Paper 1.
dominant language or poor literacy skills (Reay, 1998). It follows that principals need to initiate relationships with parents as a way of limiting these barriers (Jeynes, 2011). It is of interest to note that in school cultures where principals may have once seen their responsibility as protecting teachers from unnecessary pressures or demands from parents, now they may be more focused on facilitating relationships and communication between these two groups (Horvat et al., 2010, Robinson, 2007). This may be in response to a growing awareness that schools require an increased outward focus (Leithwood et al., 2006; Auerbach, 2009; Harris & Goodall, 2008; Muller, 2009) and that, the better the parent involvement culture in the school, the greater the positive effects for the students (Mutch & Collins, 2012; Jensen & Sonnemann, 2014).

As identified earlier, it is also possible that leadership of parent involvement has received minimum attention in the literature as it lies in a contested area of learning, where the boundaries of responsibility between home and school may be less clear (Macfarlane, 2008). The home–school divide and home-school relationships have continued to be areas of research interest, and the comparative impact of the home and school environments on learning have been highlighted in the School Effectiveness Research (Hattie, 2009; Huitt et al., 2009; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Significant among these, is the meta-analysis conducted by Hattie (2009) which reviewed 800 studies to identify the impact of 138 variables on school learning. From these variables, Hattie identified three of seven home-context variables he claims significantly impact on student learning. These are: home environment; time spent watching television; and parent involvement in the school (Hattie, 2009; Huitt et al., 2009). What is more, of these three home-based variables, parent involvement in the school is the one variable that schools are in a position to influence positively by creating context-appropriate connections between home and school. I suggest that this is clearly a leadership responsibility. Though Hattie’s research did not specifically consider CALD communities, these finding are still relevant to this work.

The significant impact of the home context has also been identified by Hill and Tyson (2009) and Leithwood et al. (2006) who note that a family’s education culture, or the academic socialisation in the home, impact on home-based learning. According to Hill and Tyson (2009, p. 762), academic socialisation is the deliberate parent behaviours that increase a child’s enjoyment and interest in education. These behaviours may include discussing learning with children, making connections between the child’s world and school tasks and fostering aspiration. What is critical to these concepts and activities is that they identify a commonality between home and school, and an alignment between expectations and activities between both environments. These findings support earlier work conducted in the United States in the 1960s that identified the positive work parents can do in the home that supports learning. As noted in Scholarly Paper 1, based on data from the
Equality of Educational Opportunity study (1966), Mayeske, Okada and Beaton (1973) claimed that family behaviours were more significant and a better indicator of school success than the socio-economic status of the family. According to Mayeske et al. (1973), shared expectations between parents and children for academic performance, the amount of time families spent to support these expectations, and students’ attitude to their work, positively impacted on student learning. Significantly, these family factors were found across a variety of families, regardless of socio-economic status or ethnicity (Bloom, 1984; Chrispeels, 1996; Clark, 1983; Hill & Tyson, 2009; Walberg, 1984).

A dichotomy between home and school can generate perceptions that restrict learning across environments. Yet connecting learning environments between home and school is critical to maximise student learning (Robinson, 2007). Epstein (1995) refers to spheres of influence across home, school and community, highlighting the supportive relationships that can occur across these three environments. While incorporating the community into the mix, it is nevertheless the home and the school environments that appear to make a positive difference to educational outcomes. An alignment between home and school has been identified as a powerful influence on student learning when the values and beliefs toward learning are exhibited and shared between settings (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). Conversely, it can be challenging for students to learn when there is a discontinuity between home and school (Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). In Bourdieusian (1977) terms, as discussed in SP 2, when a student’s habitus (that is the disposition the student has developed in the family environment) and their cultural capital (their language, vocabulary, social customs and behaviours) are similar to the dominant habitus displayed at school (the field), there is an alignment of environments that supports learning. Conversely, a student whose habitus and cultural capital differ significantly from the habitus and cultural capital demonstrated in the school (the dominant field) may find the school environment challenging and less conducive to learning; just as their parents may in terms of parent involvement. In this situation, it is not unusual for parents to question their effectiveness to parent and support their children’s learning (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997). An understanding of the impact that different life experiences and the associated habitus and cultural capital may have on student learning is useful for leaders to possess so that they can genuinely support diversity, parent involvement and demonstrate effective use of their leadership in the school field. Further, it is also important to ensure school staff have an appreciation of the impact of habitus and capital on both their own and parents’ behaviour.

This is particularly the case for leaders of schools with significant CALD communities, when specific attention is required to identify the link between leaders and parents; especially parents from a
CALD background. Although parents in these communities may appreciate the importance of school-based learning, they may not demonstrate this in a manner that is expected or accepted by the school (Lopez et al., 2001; Reay, 1998). Furthermore, where the families’ cultural capital and habitus may differ from the dominant culture of the school, it is important that leaders work to create a culture that is welcoming to a diverse range of families, and develop strategies that promote links between home and school and an acceptance of diversity (Crozier, 2001; Crozier & Davies, 2007). Critically, schools may not be aware of the array of supportive learning activities that are conducted by parents outside the school environment, as these may not be demonstrated or expressed in the expected way (Chrispeels, 1996).

**Leadership challenges**

Leadership of parent involvement for CALD communities, as with other areas of school leadership, requires particular skill, knowledge and understanding; including the skill to be able to identify what actions are required in response to the demands of the environment (Day et al., 2009; Robinson, 2007, Waters et al., 2003). Drawing on research conducted in schools supporting CALD communities, a number of recommendations for actions can be made. However, as this is relatively unexplored terrain, recommendations may be limited and raise more questions than they answer. Just as CALD parents are either largely invisible or perceived in a deficit role, leadership of parent involvement for CALD parents is also largely invisible. Yet, I suggest that this is core work for any principal of a school that caters for a culturally-diverse community (Mutch & Collins, 2012).

As has been established, much of the research conducted on leadership focuses on the principals’ vision, values and beliefs, and the work required by principals to motivate and unify staff, parents and the community to address the school’s needs in developing curriculum and teacher professional learning (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2009). This is, however, inadequate to support principals to develop appropriate practices to implement and maintain parent involvement for a CALD community. If as Robinson (2007) suggests, principals are generally not efficient at using the information from research, recommendations will prove of little use. Rather, she suggests that principals require description and practical examples that are purposefully connected to an explicit theoretical explanation. Based on findings identified through this professional doctorate, a number of recommendations regarding the leadership of parent involvement for CALD communities can be made. These draw together two separate bodies of research, one focused on educational leadership and the other on parent involvement. On the basis of these findings, I suggest that a leader also needs to display an understanding and knowledge of the community and the skill to know when and how to implement
any of these practices identified in the research literature (Lingard & Christie, 2003; Waters et al., 2009).

The following leadership actions have the potential to facilitate the integration of everyday school practices to support a connection between home and school and provide culturally-appropriate opportunities for CALD parental involvement. Everyday school practices include fostering two-way communication which is important for a CALD community as this provides parents with the means of participating in their children’s school-based learning and with the opportunity to display their cultural capital and form relationships in the school (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010; Mutch & Collins, 2012). Acknowledging parents’ role in their children’s learning, and making connections between learning at home and school is also recommend for a multicultural community as this practice suggests a shared goal (Jeynes, 2005; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). Providing a formal role for parents in school, including decision-making, provides a respectful opportunity for parents to be at or involved in school (Bourdieu, 1977, 1987; Carreon et al., 2005; Horvat & Lareau, 1999). Leadership that encourages parent involvement also requires leaders to work with their staff to develop an understanding of the value of parent involvement, to articulate staff roles that support parent-involvement practices and to help improve the skills of staff to do this (Carreon et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Pena, 2000). I suggest that when staff have an understanding of the value of parent involvement for a CALD community, it is possible for the principal to distribute leadership across the school staff and parent community. The distribution of the leadership of parent involvement is a key facilitator as this practice provides opportunities for staff and parents to demonstrate their knowledge, leadership capacity and cultural capital (Harris, 2003, 2004; Spillane et al., 2001). Facilitating connections with the community also supports the leadership of parent involvement as this strengthens school networks and accesses the required resources (Epstein, 1995, 2004, 2007, 2010; Lopez et al., 2001; Mutch & Collins, 2012).

While this information may be useful, it will have reduced value if principals are not aware of the barriers and challenges that CALD parents often face in becoming involved in their children’s school. The impact of positional power on the relationships between parents and school leaders can also impact negatively on parent involvement. This impact draws attention to the tensions that can develop in the day-to-day interactions that form these complex relationships (Auerbach, 2007; Horvat et al., 2010; Reay, 1998). When integrating the above considerations into their repertoire of practice, principals need to note that it is not what they do to lead, rather it is the way they lead that

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34 For a fuller exploration, see Scholarly Paper 1 and Professional Practice Initiative 1 of this professional doctorate.

35 This was discussed in detail in Professional Practice Initiative 2.
is of critical importance to the effectiveness of school leadership (Leithwood et al., 2006; Mutch & Collins, 2012).

**A way forward**

The purpose of this scholarly paper was to explore the complex role of principals as educational leaders and identify the specific skills, knowledge and understanding required to support parent involvement in a CALD community. Effective school leadership is critical to enhanced student outcomes (Day et al., 2009; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003; Weiss et al., 2009). Despite the amount of research conducted in the area of educational leadership and the importance of parent involvement to student learning, a gap remains in the current understanding of the relationship between school leadership and parent involvement (Auerbach, 2009; Griffith, 2000; Horvat et al., 2010). This is particularly the case for CALD communities. I suggest this is in part due to the complexity of the task of leading a school, the constant number of conflicting demands of the role of the principal and the narrow conceptualisation of school leadership, which is often explored in research as either scholarship or as practice (Firestone & Shipps, 2005; Lingard & Christie, 2003). When leadership is conceived as both scholarship and practice, then the complexity, challenges and difficulties of the role might be more readily included in the conceptualisation of this complex construct of the principal (Lingard & Christie, 2003). The range of responsibilities included in the task of leadership and the impact of the conditions of practice – including the influence of the operation of power, social justice and values in complex diverse environments – are significant elements of the construct. However, given that parent involvement has the capacity to significantly impact on student learning, creating an environment and school practices that are welcoming to parents, particularly parents from a CALD background, is a significant leadership responsibility (Hattie, 2009; Huitt et al., 2009).

As Auerbach (2009), Griffith (2000) and Horvat et al. (2010) have indicated, the literature exploring the intersection between parent involvement and leadership is weak. This reflects both contemporary school practice and what is currently known of the work of leaders in involving and supporting parent involvement. While research recommends best or effective practice, it appears that practice in the area of leadership of parent involvement is inadequate. Furthermore, examples of positive work in this area are often trials and may not be sustainable. Based on the scholarship identified through this review of literature on the leadership of parent involvement, the next section, Professional Practice Initiative 3 (PPI 3), turns the lens of leadership onto my own practice. PPI 3 investigates the impact of my leadership of parent involvement for a CALD community and, in so doing, identifies the understanding, knowledge and skills required by school leaders to develop
effective processes, practices and strategies to support parent involvement for a CALD community. It will provide practical examples of leadership practice supported with theoretical explanations.
The purpose of this PPI is to systematically reflect on and evaluate the leadership strategies I employed as principal or leader of Norton PS to build parent involvement in a predominantly culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) community. This account draws together the scholarly, professional and personal aspects of my leadership journey framed across three temporal phases, as identified in the introductory narrative. These leadership phases have been identified and described by Day et al. (2009) as three sequenced phases in which principals employ different strategies as dictated by the environment. In this PPI, I integrate the research literature from school leadership and parent involvement together with the data collected at the school site to evaluate the school leadership strategies. I also reflect on the practices through which my leadership habitus was activated and developed, as I was both being informed by the field and, in turn, informing the field (Lingard & Christie, 2003; Maton, 2012).

As identified in Scholarly Paper 3 (SP 3), a knowledge gap exists in the relationship between leadership and parent involvement, particularly for CALD communities (Auerbach, 2011; Griffith, 2000; Horvat et al., 2010). While general leadership principles can be applied to parent involvement in the same way as they can to other aspects of school leadership, it appears that the leadership of parent involvement remains largely the ‘hidden work’ of principals. I suggest that this work remains hidden because there is an assumption that parent involvement happens with ease and therefore attracts less value (Roksa & Potter, 2011). Furthermore, parent involvement is often unseen and can be devalued as women’s work (Hanafin & Lynch, 1992; Reay, 1999, 2004). A knowledge gap also exists regarding how schools can support CALD parents to be involved in their children’s school. While there is an assumption that parents will automatically be involved in their children’s school-based learning, CALD parents are not always aware of the ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989) and so are often invisible or considered deficient in the role of parent (Crozier, 2001, 2003; Roksa & Potter, 2011). Leadership is required to support CALD parents to be involved in their children’s school and learning in ways that they choose rather than in roles dictated by the school.

According to Day et al. (2009), the work of successful principals involves particular tasks across three broad phases. In the first phase, principals will focus on improving the physical environment,
establishing communication and student behaviour management protocols, structuring senior leadership roles and implementing performance management systems. During the second phase, principals generally focus on using data for decision making and on distributing leadership. Throughout the third phase, the principal’s work will focus on personalising and enriching the curriculum and further distributing leadership.

Using this three-phase structure to reflect on my leadership of parent involvement at Norton PS, my focus during the first phase involved getting to know all stakeholders who make up the school community, investigating the strategies used for parent involvement and establishing communication protocols between home and school. My focus during the second phase was on establishing suitable parent activities and programs, plus introducing shared leadership of parent involvement across the school community. During the third phase, my leadership focus was on the development of an enriched parent-involvement culture through broadly shared leadership. While my leadership strategies did not always fall neatly into any one phase, there were distinct habits and practices that characterised each phase (Day et al., 2009). I have used the phases to systematically reflect on the changes and developments in leadership practices that led to embedding parent involvement into the culture of the school. Phase one covered a two-year period (2005–2006); phase two covered a four-year period (2007–2010) and phase three covered a four-year period (2011–2014). My reflection on each phase is informed by scholarship developed during the study and the final phase, distributed leadership, coincides with the actual period of this doctoral study.

My reflection on the three phases of my leadership and parent involvement is presented in five sections. The first section considers the research on educational leadership, specifically the leadership of parent involvement.37 The second section locates the investigation within Bourdieu’s theoretical framework to theorise leadership. The third section outlines the research methodology employed in this study. The fourth section is the analysis of leadership practices that support parent involvement across the three temporal phases, and the fifth section discusses the findings regarding leadership of parent involvement in a CALD community. This reflection addresses an existing gap between leadership and parent involvement in a CALD community by exploring the ‘hidden work’ of leadership to move beyond ‘what’ to do, in order to identify ‘how’ to do it. Additionally, this PPI explores the often-ignored complexities of parent involvement, including integrating parent involvement into the school culture, institutionalised racism (Crozier, 2001) and the lack of capacity in schools to support the process of change to improve parent involvement.

37 See Scholarly Paper 3 for more information on the theories of leadership and parent involvement in schools.
Educational leadership

As has been noted in Scholarly Paper 3 (SP3), the work of school leaders is complex and develops in response to the needs of the environment (Robinson, 2007). Leadership requires a sophisticated repertoire of skills, knowledge and understanding to ensure quality teaching and learning occurs in a complex setting (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). Critically, a direct link has been established between quality school leadership and enhanced student outcomes (Day et al., 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). It has also been established that the closer the principal is to the learning agenda, rather than to the administrative responsibilities of the school, the better the student outcomes (Robinson, 2007). Interestingly, schools that create and maintain strong relationships with parents generally have better student outcomes, suggesting that the link between developing relationships with parents, and improving parent involvement in the school is critical to enhanced student performance (Jensen & Sonnerman, 2013; Harris, Allen, & Goodall, 2008; Zbar, Kimber, & Marshall, 2009). This relationship between parent involvement and leadership cannot be left to chance, rather it requires responsive leadership and development processes that involve the whole school community.

My main tasks as leader are to respond to the demands of the learning environment, to work with the school community to build coherence across school practices and to ensure enhanced student outcomes by supporting, directing and motivating learning (Leithwood et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). Given that Norton PS has a culturally-diverse community with a high turnover of students and a substantial number of new families arriving annually from different countries and cultures, I considered that the school needed to create a warm and inviting environment to welcome CALD families (Crozier, 2001; Jeynes, 2011). It was vital that the ‘school field’ acknowledged the needs of the parents and community, and developed appropriate curriculum, communication protocols and parent programs to promote involvement in the school. Based on my vision for an effective learning agenda, I was focused on involving parents in a culturally appropriate way, informed by the available research (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Lopez et al., 2001). This translated into acknowledging the parents’ role as their children’s first teacher, creating an accessible environment for parents and providing a range of opportunities for parents to be at the school (Crozier, 2001; Desimone, 1999; Epstein, 1986, 1995; Henderson & Mapp, 2002, Jeynes, 2011). I was of the view that effective learning partnerships between school staff and parents would support student learning. As leader, this meant taking into account the specific needs of parents from a range of cultures, with different languages and skills, and a variety of expectations and attitudes regarding their role in their children’s learning (Bakker & Denessen, 2007b). In addition to being mindful of how to help parents become involved, an important leadership task is to work with the staff to
ensure that they had an understanding of the value of parent involvement and the capacity to do this work (Carreon et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Pena, 2000). As a range of leadership tasks operate unnoticed, the ‘hidden work’ of leading parent involvement needs to be made more explicit and visible.

My leadership for parent involvement

Though minimal research has been conducted on the leadership of parent involvement in schools for CALD communities, information and insights can be drawn from the general literature on leadership in relation to parent involvement to identify relevant leadership considerations for a CALD community. Drawing on this research, a number of practices and perspectives can be introduced into a leader’s repertoire to support leadership in CALD school communities (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Biddulph et al., 2003; Goodall & Vorhaus, 2011; Horvat et al., 2010; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson et al, 2009). These practices fall into two groups, practices and strategies that enhance parent involvement and those that block involvement. The practices and perspectives that enhance parent involvement include, among other things, an understanding from the principal that parents make a difference to student learning, and the ability to develop a vision and collaboratively plan for activities that involve parents (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Horvat et al., 2010; Kim, 2009; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Robinson, et al., 2009).

Other practices that support the leadership of parent involvement in a CALD community were identified in the analysis conducted in PPI 1. These practices include identifying the purpose of parent involvement activities; integrating parent involvement in planning; establishing two-way communication strategies; offering a range of programs and activities tailored to the parents’ specific needs; providing opportunities for parents to form relationships with staff and others; and developing strategies for teachers and school leaders to support parent involvement; and collaborating with the broader community.

The barriers to parent involvement for CALD parents have been identified and discussed in detail throughout this professional doctorate. Although the barriers restricting parent involvement are extensively explored in the research, I suggest that more research is required for a better understanding of how existing practices block parent involvement (Auerbach, 2007, 2009; Carreon et al., 2005; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Doucet, 2011; Epstein, 1995; Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Jeynes, 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Mapp & Kuttcher, 2013; Mills & Gale, 2002, 2007, 2010; Nakagawa, 2000; Reay, 2001; Wong & Hughes, 2006).

38 Based on the analysis of the evidence collected during this professional doctorate at Norton PS, there appear to be four significant challenges not generally

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38 Refer to Professional Practice Initiative 1 for more details.
explored in the literature. These are:

1. the complexity of integrating parent involvement into the school field
2. the impact of institutional racism
3. the lack of school capacity to support parent involvement
4. the financial commitment required to develop an effective parent involvement program.

I suggest that these challenges are more significant impediments to the implementation of parent involvement than many organisational barriers identified in the literature, and require specific leadership to address systematically.

In addition to the above information on leadership, it was necessary to look below the surface of daily interactions in the school to understand the operation of parent involvement in a CALD community. I required a theoretical framework that would allow me to identify and understand the multiple levels of communication and the dimensions of interpersonal relationships that impact on parent involvement and leadership practice.

**Theorising leadership**

In reflecting on my role as a leader in developing and embedding parent involvement practices for a CALD community, this paper continues to employ Bourdieu’s theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1973). As leadership of parent involvement is often hidden, this framework provides a lens through which to view leadership actions and note the impact of leadership on the situated every day (Thomson, 2001). As identified in SP 2, Bourdieu’s concepts provide the language and tools through which everyday exchanges may be observe and discussed. The concepts provide a structure to investigate interactions that may often go unnoticed or be taken for granted, yet may have a negative impact on the status quo of the occupants in the field (Webb et al., 2002). A Bourdieusian perspective also provides the opportunity to develop a broader understanding of the functions of leadership in the field. Such an analysis addresses a weakness in the leadership literature that often reduces this complex task to a checklist, or employs a binary notion of either leading or being led (Lingard & Christie, 2003). Bourdieu’s theoretical framework provides a lens through which to view the multiple leadership actions that occur simultaneously or at different times in the field, in different locations and by a range of players.

On a broader level, a Bourdieusian framework has been used throughout this professional doctorate to explore the role education can play in social reproduction, maintenance of the status quo and discriminatory practices that often occur in schools (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2010). Leadership can also play a significant role in the maintenance of educational inequality, often
unintentionally (Baquedano-López et al., 2013). Bourdieu’s framework was useful in identifying how leadership practices recognise, legitimate, or reject the efforts of parents and teachers to activate their capital and habitus in the field.\(^{39}\) Recognising or acknowledging the everyday practices of CALD parents promotes flexibility, activation and adjustment of habitus, thus avoiding or reducing the reproduction of inequality (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The acknowledgement of parents’ efforts is of particular importance to CALD parents who are often new residents, as it can empower parents and, at the same time, situate the school field as a potentially safe and respectful place. Leadership capacity and authority is possessed by many occupants in the field, as demonstrated through the Bourdieusian three-phase field analysis conducted earlier in this research.\(^{40}\) This information made it possible to observe and reflect on leadership practices being performed by different players in different parts of the field. Through this reflection it was possible to recognise how leadership actions impact on the changing habitus of various members of the school community (Lingard & Christie, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2003).

The research process

This PPI builds on the earlier investigations. PPI 1 identified school practices that support parent involvement. PPI 2 investigated the various attitudes to parent involvement within the school community. PPI 3 reflects on the leadership strategies used at Norton PS to support parent. As the purpose of this doctorate is to identify ways to enrich parent involvement within a CALD community through a redistribution of leadership, this PPI will address two main questions.

1. What leadership practices in the school support parent involvement?
2. What opportunities exist for distributed leadership and leadership-capacity building?

Evaluation of leadership

As noted previously, there is a gap in the research exploring the leadership of parent involvement, particularly in CALD communities (Auerbach, 2011; Horvat et al., 2010). Where it is present, leadership of parent involvement is ‘hidden work’ that is poorly designed and rarely evaluated (Epstein, 2010; Flessa, 2008; Harris and Goodall, 2008; Sheldon, 2003). As a result, no specific criteria currently exist for the evaluation of leadership of this kind. To address this, I synthesised the information from the literature on parent involvement and leadership.

The synthesis of the information produced seven key criteria for the effective leadership of parent involvement in a CALD community. These are:

\(^{39}\) This is discussed more fully in Scholarly Paper 2.
\(^{40}\) See Scholarly Paper 2.
1. facilitating communication with parents, particularly two-way communication
2. acknowledging parents’ roles in their children’s learning and making connections between learning at home and school
3. providing a formal role for parents in school including decision making
4. assisting teachers’ professional learning in relation to the role of parent involvement
5. facilitating connections with the broader community
6. distributing the leadership of parent involvement
7. limiting barriers to the operation of parent involvement.\footnote{41}

Data sources

As principal, I was in the privileged position of accessing a broad range of records routinely collected as part of my professional practice. Consequently, data were drawn from a variety of sources during the reflection of each phase of leadership. The different sources of data informed the identification of the hidden work of leadership (Richardson, 1994; Denzin, 2009; Ellingson, 2009). The data sources included:

- school records
- demographic information
- parent newsletters
- parent comments regarding programs operating (not just numbers)
- recollections with key informants including parents, staff, students, the leadership team and community partners
- documented parent queries to staff in front office
- diary notes from conversations with parents, staff, students
- emails, written notes or cards from parents
- personal reflections
- records of meetings and minutes with partner organisations
- information from semi-structured interviews (during the third phase).

Sixty parent newsletters, twelve term planners, the notes from twelve parents and citizens (P&C) meetings, the minutes from three community consultations, twenty-three personal reflections and

\footnote{41 See Appendix 3: Data Collection Schedule.}
forty-seven diary notes drawn from both informal conversations with parents and comments from teachers, students and office staff were analysed against the set criteria. The patterns of parent attendance at activities and organisation of the activities were also considered. These patterns of activities and parent attendance were compared across the three phases of leadership as outlined in Appendix 3: Data Collection Schedule.

The analytical process

Reflection on the leadership of parent involvement at Norton PS was conducted by systematically identifying the leadership practices against the seven identified criteria shown in Appendix 3: Data Collection Schedule. I reflected on my actions against these criteria in each of the three leadership phases. My reflections on the information collected were also informed by the school’s demographic records on families that included country of origin, cultural background, language spoken at home, length of time in the country and religion. The first reading of the data sources was used to identify leadership actions, the ‘hidden work’, against the seven criteria for effective leadership of parent involvement. The focus of the second reading was on identifying changes or developments in parent-involvement practices over time, or across phases of leadership.

Reflecting on leadership practices

Following is a systematic discussion of my leadership practices against each of the seven criteria as set out in Appendix 3: Data Collection Schedule, the reflection on each phase is structured in two parts. The first section is the identification of leadership actions and the second is a reflection on these actions.

Phase 1: 2005–2006

Reflecting on the first phase of my leadership at Norton PS, I was mainly interested in communication protocols – if the physical environment catered for parents and how parent involvement was evaluated at the school. The information collected during this phase revealed minimal evidence of activities or opportunities for parents to be at the school and little leadership in terms of parent involvement.

At the beginning of this phase of leadership, there were four parent-focused activities in operation: a ‘meet the teacher’ session held at the beginning the year to introduce parents to their children’s new teacher, parent and teacher meetings held annually in the middle of the year to discuss children’s progress, a multicultural playgroup run weekly with a partner organisation, and Leapfrogs, a kindergarten orientation program for parents and students to learn about the school. Practices
that supported communication included a fortnightly parent bulletin, and Parents and Citizens (P&C) meetings, which were held twice each term.

The school had a relationship with one partner organisation that operated the Multicultural playgroup. A Community Liaison Officer (CLO) was employed a half day each week to support the links between home and school. While this might suggest significant involvement, reflecting on these activities suggests that they are little more than formulaic, and not tailored to address parents’ specific needs (Mapp & Kuttner, 2013). This reflection is informed by the attendance numbers: 22 parents attended the first Meet the Teacher program recorded for this PPI. There were 155 parents at a similar event five years later as a result of the work that had been done. There is evidence of some growth in the leadership of parent involvement during this phase in response to identified needs. The strategies used included: communication with parents, teachers’ professional learning, increased connections with the community, and the distribution or sharing of leadership of parent involvement.

**Communication with parents**

The Parent Newsletter was the consistent formal communication from the school to parents. During this first phase, there was some change in the tone of the Parent Newsletter, moving from reminders such as: ‘The P&C meeting will be held next week’, to the acknowledgement of parents’ presence at school and their work. These acknowledgements included the following:

> This month’s P&C meeting was very interesting. Thank you to the parents who came along and joined in the discussion on uniforms. These ideas will be recorded and finalised at the next meeting. Please join in if you would like to add your ideas *(Newsletter, March, 2005)*.

> The sports carnival was a great success. Thank you to the parents who joined us at the oval and cheered the teams on. Congratulations to the parent team who won the ‘tug of war’ competition! *(Newsletter, July, 2005)*.

While the parent newsletter provided consistent information to the parent community, I received useful feedback from one parent at this time. She explained that talking with parents was more useful than the newsletter as it was personalised, engaging and therefore of greater value. She explained:

> Give me a piece of paper if you want me to come to something but, if you want me to be there, just tell me then I’ll know that you want me there *(Diary note, parent discussion, April, 2005)*.

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42 See Appendix 4: Attendance Records.
Following this conversation, I suggested that teachers personally invite parents to school events. I also discussed with staff and some parents whether parent newsletters should be translated into the main community languages. From these discussions I learnt that many parents were not literate in their mother tongue and that it may be embarrassing for them to be unable to read translated documents. When information went home in English, it was easier for some parents to ask questions or request help, while asking questions about translated documents could be awkward. As a result of this insight, only minimal information was translated and decisions, regarding which information would be translated, were supported by data collected during PPI 2.

**Acknowledging parents’ roles and making connections between learning at home and school**

Apart from references to parents’ work made in the newsletter, there was minimal evidence of acknowledging parents and purposely connecting home and school. During this phase, while there was less data to draw on, I was not aware of the importance of making this connection visible in the school.

**Facilitating parent decision making**

There was no evidence of attempts to support parent decision making during this phase. While the Parents and Citizens (P&C) meetings were conducted twice a term, during this phase, these meeting were opportunities for discussion rather than being an opportunity for parents to make decisions.

**Teacher professional learning**

Teacher professional learning (TPL) was required to provide opportunities for teachers to explore the culture developing in the school under the new leadership. The style of professional learning was crucial to the effectiveness of parent involvement programs and I was of the view that a didactic approach to TPL was not appropriate at this time. As a result, I chose discussion and exploration of ideas with staff as the most effective way to identify how Norton PS could work with parents to increase the level and productivity of parent involvement and thus improve student learning.

Exploring these ideas, in the second year of this phase, a Year 2 teacher noted after the Meet the Teacher session that:

I had more parents here than last year and some parents asked really interesting questions. I felt like we can work together (Diary note, March 2006).
Connections with the community

I was aware that the majority of parents, as migrants and new residents to the country, were facing a range of settlement challenges (Cardona et al., 2009). These challenges included looking for housing, seeking employment, learning how to access services, finding out about their entitlements as new residents and getting to know the school system. I was also aware that the school did not have adequate resources to provide the range of services required as we lacked the budget and the staffing. While providing such services is not usually considered the main role of schools, I knew that community organisations could provide these resources and that, at times, many organisations actively sought to make connections with schools. Therefore, I looked for partnerships beyond the school and additional system-based resources to support parent involvement (Epstein et al., 2010). With this additional support, I introduced English language classes for parents with a partner organisation, and gave additional support to the multicultural playgroup in the form of a teaching assistance for three hours each week.

Distributed leadership of parent involvement

By involving partner organisations, leadership began to function in a different way as community partners also shared leadership and decision making. This led to a subtle change in the operation of both parent involvement and decision making at the school, with other personnel increasingly making suggestions, decisions and providing resources for the school.

Reflections on Phase 1

There were few conspicuous leadership practices supporting parent involvement during this first phase of leadership. The main work of leadership was to establish parent communication via the newsletter, improve teacher professional learning and introduce connections with the community. I was also occupied with the ‘hidden work’ of leadership such as: embedding practices for communication with parents (Auerbach, 2009), creating relationships across the school (Carreon et al., 2005; Lopez et al., 2001; Pena, 2000), and making connections between home and school; between parents and teachers (Crozier, 1999, 2001; Jeynes, 2003; Mutch & Collins, 2013; Reay, 1998). At this time, the field was not receptive to parent involvement and presented a number of obstacles to parent involvement and the development of relationships. One such obstacle was the continuation of traditional programs that failed to meet parents’ needs and were consequently poorly attended (Harris & Goodall, 2008; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Sheldon, 2003). This poor attendance was interpreted by staff as disinterest from the parents, rather than evidence of offering inappropriate programs.
It appeared that the cultural and social capital of the CALD community, both staff and parents, was not valued (Bourdieu, 1973, 1986, 2007). This was demonstrated by the lack of suitable activities for parents and the racialised comments from some staff members directed toward both parents and CALD teachers. As the new principal in the field, I considered these behaviours unhelpful at best, exclusionary and racist at worst. Howard (2007) suggests that such conduct is the result of poor cultural understanding or what he identifies as cultural competence. By identifying and naming the (possibly unintentional) racism operating in the school, I can now see I was questioning the culture of the school and the subtle behaviours and ingrained attitudes of some of the teachers (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Mills & Gale, 2010). In so doing, I risked alienating staff from the change process and the changes themselves being rejected by them. Yet, for the changes to be implemented, I required the support of the majority of the staff (McIver et al., 2009; Riehl, 2003). I worked toward building staff support in three ways: I acknowledged teachers’ work in the classrooms and their efforts to communicate with parents; I questioned racist comments; and supported the organisation of staff workshops to explore cultural diversity and develop cultural competence (Howard, 2007).

During this phase, my leadership habitus was focused on learning about and responding to the field. I used my social capital to draw on my professional networks to create community partnerships and access additional resources to operate parent activities and programs. As a result of the professional capital acquired from my scholarship, I became aware of how my demonstration of subtle forms of leadership – including being welcoming and forming relationships within the school community – supported the early development of the leadership of parent involvement at Norton PS (Jeynes, 2011).

**Phase 2: 2007–2010**

In response to the findings from phase 1, my leadership focus during phase 2 was to adjust communication protocols, build staff skill, form relationships in and beyond the school, and adjust the school environment to further support parent involvement. This phase also saw the beginnings of distributed leadership. The leadership practices used during this phase were: improving communication; acknowledging parents’ role in their children’s learning; empowering parents as decision makers; focusing on teacher professional learning; making connections with the community, and distributing the leadership of parent involvement.

**Communication**

Reflection on this phase shows evidence of an extended range of opportunities for communication and spaces for conversations with parents (using interpreters as required). I recommended that the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) make phone calls to parents to follow up on issues, and suggested
teachers make phone contact with parents if they had the language skills (specific community language) or use the phone interpreter service. I also introduced an additional playground duty and allocated a member of the leadership team to that duty each afternoon after school. This meant one of the leadership team was available to engage with parents daily in an informal way. Messages in the parent newsletter continued to acknowledge parents’ presence at the school and their role in their children’s learning. My acknowledgement and recognition of parents during this phase aimed to connect home and school,

Congratulations to the new P&C executive (Newsletter, March, 2007).

Thank you to all the parents who helped in the library with book covering last week. Their help is very much appreciated (Newsletter, June, 2008).

Congratulations to all the parents who completed the four-week parenting course last Wednesday. Participants said the information was very helpful and they have suggested additional sessions be held (Newsletter, April, 2008, photos of parents included).

Additional signage in the main community languages was also placed throughout the school. These simple communication strategies indicate that the school was catering for parents and supporting the formation of relationships.

During this phase, I learnt from the Community Liaison Officer (CLO) that:

Many of our recently-arrived parents have been traumatised in their home country and while getting here, they have trouble trusting people with authority or power (My diary note, August, 2009).

Based on this discussion, the CLO suggested that I spend time informally with parents to build trust and help them feel more comfortable at the school. In response to this information, I made a point of visiting parent sessions in the Community Room to welcome parents, introduce activities and conduct casual conversations. By spending time with parents, demonstrating our shared interest and learning with them, I was acknowledging their cultural capital and habitus and sharing mine. This allowed me to build reciprocity and respect (Bourdieu, 1973, 1986, 2007).

Acknowledging parents’ role and making connections in learning between home and school

The school’s efforts to acknowledge parents’ roles in learning and to make connections between learning at home and school increased during this phase. In addition to the acknowledgements in the parent newsletter, there were also personalised invitations to school functions and curriculum-information sessions. Of note during this phase was the introduction of Dads’ Games Night,
supported by partner organisations (June, 2009). This was an attempt to involve fathers, or a significant male figure, in their children’s learning. As the session was held after school, 5–7.00 pm, it was well attended and created the opportunity for fathers, uncles or brothers to be part of a child’s learning at school and to form connections with the school community. This activity, which is now one of the school’s annual events, also provided opportunity for ‘dads’ to be at school, show their interest in their children’s learning and thus activate and display their cultural capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). The Homework Centre was also introduced during this phase with the support of a partner organisation. Targeted students attended the Homework Centre weekly for individual support. As part of the Homework Centre, two information sessions were held each term for parents to explain homework activities to them. Attendances at these after-school sessions were consistently high. Teachers also conducted curriculum information sessions for parents, as requested, demonstrating reading lessons, maths activities and explaining homework activities to parents.43

Parents as decision makers

Parents as decision makers feature strongly across the parent-involvement literature although it had not been a significant feature at Norton PS, in part, due to the high turnover of families (Epstein, 2010; Sheldon, 2003). There were, however, a number of occasions when parents assumed the position of decision makers. During the latter part of this phase, the P&C president suggested that the school introduce a computerised maths program as part of student homework. Earlier, I had dismissed the idea of using this program due to costs. In response to the president’s suggestion, the leadership team organised an information session about the computer program for the parents. There was high parent interest in the program as it provided sequenced activities for students along with an opportunity for parents to become familiar with the curriculum and the language of the curriculum in their home. This parent initiative was empowering to the community, was valued by them and promoted the sharing of valued capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). The opportunity to be decision makers impacted positively on parents and provides an opportunity for them to activate and display their cultural capital at the school and gave them a voice (Lawson, 2003). This program continues to be integrated into student homework.

Following the success of this parent initiative, other members of the P&C made suggestions regarding actions that could be taken to make the school more parent friendly. Examples of these included a request for parents to be informed at the beginning of each term of the focus of the curriculum and the timing of student assessments. There was also a request for a parent calendar each term advertising all planned activities that involved parents and families. Each of these requests

43 See Appendix 4: Attendance Records.
was discussed with staff and supported by them, and became part of the school protocol and a way of actively involving parents in their children’s school learning. While none of these requests are particularly novel or unusual (these are communication strategies that are used in many schools), they are significant in the context of Norton PS as these requests are illustrative of the parents’ knowledge of the field, plus their increasing ability to activate and demonstrate their cultural capital and change their environment (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). Parents were showing increasing confidence in the field, teachers were accepting their recommendations, and in some cases responding positively to the increased interest from parents.

These modifications demonstrate a changing field capable of supporting parent needs and a subtle shift in the operation of power, with parents exhibiting some control and informing the field (Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010).

**Teacher professional learning**

The Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) team was formed under the leadership of the deputy principal during this phase. The team was formed by volunteers interested in developing leadership skills. Following staff surveys, activities were organised to meet the identified needs. In addition to curriculum input, the TPL team invited guest speakers from their own cultural networks to the school to share information on different cultural and ethnic groups. It was recognised that the sessions were not to reduce the families’ complex cultural backgrounds to homogeneous simplistic views (Watkins, 2013). These sessions allowed staff to explore the myriad of challenges that accompany cultural difference and to build a broader understanding of culture and diversity (Cardona et al., 2009). They also provided opportunities for staff to discuss their own cultural backgrounds, practices and identities and contribute their perceptions of diversity and culture in the school. As staff members voiced their experiences, understanding and opinions broader meanings of culture, ethnicity and identity grew from these discussions (Leithwood & Riehl; 2003). One effect of these discussions was that staff perceived students (and parents) differently. Also the concept of individuality and not as members of a cultural or ethnic group emerged.

**Connections with the community**

In response to the needs of the parents and drawing on the relationships created with community partners, I organised additional English language classes for parents, introduced parent computer classes, extended the homework centre and continued to support the multicultural playgroup. These additional activities, which were introduced to meet parents’ needs, were held in the school grounds and so were easily accessed by parents. The English classes provided opportunity for parents to develop their conversational and functional English in small group sessions while the computer
classes gave parents access to the internet and email facilities as well as providing tuition. The multicultural playgroup was already popular and the continued support for the program ensured parents and pre-school children could continue to access this service and form relationships with other parents. All these programs were well attended and received positive feedback from parents. During a discussion with parents following the end of term ‘homework centre’ celebration, I asked parents what we should be doing next. One parent responded strongly saying:

Just don’t stop doing things. We have good things here but they never last; people take them away. Just don’t stop doing it. This is what we need (Diary note, September 2007).

This parent response provided a salient lesson. As the school did not have adequate resources to conduct all the programs that were in operation, I needed to maintain relationships with community partners to ensure activities would continue to operate. The community partnerships were sustained due to the strong attendance at the classes and the playgroup. Several additional partnerships were formed at this time, and further activities were introduced for parents including language-specific activities, for example a parenting program for Bangladeshi parents who were from a cultural community new to the area was introduced. A key responsibility for me in maintaining the relationships with community partners was supporting their organisational goals. I did this by attending meetings, working on funding submissions, keeping partners informed about program evaluations, being at their functions and occasionally doing presentations for them. The school choir and drum group also performed at functions held by our partner organisations.

**Distributed leadership of parent involvement**

At this point in my leadership practice, I shared leadership of parent involvement with the leadership team, as they were demonstrating an understanding and readiness to take on this role.

The parents have so much to share; I am really enjoying working with them. I can see the impact on student learning (Diary note, Assistant Principal Year 1).

I’m in the playground. I keep the communication open. I’m talking to the parents every day (Diary note, Assistant Principal Year 4).

The Meet the Teacher program was organised collaboratively by the leadership team. Rather than following a traditional style of presentation that failed to cater for parents’ needs, this activity was organised to cater for parents’ interests, as identified through discussions with the P&C (Harris and Goodall, 2008; Mapp & Kuttner, 2013; Sheldon, 2003). For instance, the leadership team considered the timing of the event, the content, style of delivery, childcare, catering, use of interpreters and

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44 See Appendix 4: Attendance Records.
how the invitations would be distributed. Parents were also asked to present information and answer parents’ questions.

The planning for this program resulted in the best attendance the school had experienced for such an event, with attendance rates of parents increasing by sixty per cent.45 Parents were positive about attending a session where they understood information and their concerns were heard and addressed. As a result, the teachers were motivated and felt supported by parents who acknowledged their work. From this time, leaders were asked to keep a record of attendance at any activity that involved parents. Parent-teacher meetings were conducted later in the year with the same level of thought and organisation. This resulted in even stronger attendance. The impact of these meetings was expressed by one staff member.

This week I saw at least one parent of every child in my class. I’ve been teaching 22 years and this has never happened. I now know more about every child in my class and their family. It’s hard to describe how satisfying this is to me. I think we should hold these meetings earlier next year to get to know parents earlier (Teacher comment after parent teacher interviews, my diary note, March 2008).

Reflection on Phase 2

During the second phase of leadership, I was no longer ‘a newcomer’, and thus more aware of the ‘rules of the game’ (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1989). I had both informed and been informed by the field (Maton, 2012). Based on the practices that had operated in the school, supported by the doxa, I was dismantling obsolete practices, introducing new practices and attempting to make clear links between former and current practices (Fine, 1994; Fullan, 2011).

Drawing on Bourdieu to theorise the changing nature of the school culture, I noted that the habitus of parents was not always accepted by staff and, in some cases, parents did not consider that they had a role or place at the school (Hoover-Dempsey & Sandler, 1997; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). These attitudes presented a challenge to the continued development of the parent-involvement program. However, I continued to focus on creating conditions that were welcoming to parents and introduced activities that would give parents the skills to operate more actively and comfortably in the field (Crozier & Davies, 2007; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003; Turney & Kao, 2009). English classes provided skills for communication, the Homework Centre provided opportunities to become familiar with the curriculum, and the use of interpreters further supported communication. These activities and practices created both opportunities and conditions for parents to be in the school field, and to activate and demonstrate their cultural capital and habitus (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). These programs also created increased opportunities for parents

45 See Appendix 4: Attendance Records.
and teachers to communicate, discuss students’ learning and thus develop relationships. The teacher professional learning (TPL), provided through cultural input sessions and discussion of parents’ roles in school learning, offered the opportunity for teachers to explore culture and identity, to further build their own capital and to consider the benefits of parent involvement. Increased parent attendance at programs, and feedback from both parents and teachers, indicated that the Norton PS field was changing.

While there were many changes and developments at the school in response to leadership practices, it would be inaccurate to suggest that all changes in the parent-involvement program were fully supported by the staff, as some examples of subtle resistance were demonstrated. This resistance took the form of both institutionalised racism and ‘rituals of cooperation’ (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Crozier, 1999, 2001; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Such rituals include some teachers, on the one hand publicly supporting changes in the school’s routine or speaking positively about changes that reinforced parent involvement and then, on the other hand, not cooperating with the changes. These rituals could reduce the impact of attempted changes while a discussion of concerns about changes could support an investigation of possibilities of parent-involvement strategies.

Some teachers continued to express the view that parents were not interested in their children’s learning and criticised what they described as poor parenting.

They just don’t care; they are never up here. I’m sick of trying (My diary note, Year 5 Teacher comment overheard in staff room, October, 2009).

Such comments seemed incongruent with what was happening at the school, as the number of activities for parents and their attendance at school functions had both increased. This comment, however, may be a reflection of loss of power or redistribution of power experienced by some teachers and also an explanation for the rituals of cooperation. It may also be the case that teachers were focusing on parents they considered not involved, rather than giving attention to those who were, ignoring the changes that parents had made (Jeynes, 2011; Kim, 2009; Lawson, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001). As discrimination and racism had subtly operated uncensored for some time, it was not surprising that some negative stereotyping of parent behaviour continued (Lott, 2003). At the end of this phase, one teacher confirmed my sense of the discrimination and racism that had historically operated at the school.

I felt like the last principal had put the staff into three groups. The wogs [sic] were at the bottom, the people she liked were on the top layer and everyone else was in the middle. That’s true and I’m not the only one who felt like that. I don’t think she meant to be racist but she was. And it wasn’t just the principal; other people in leadership positions did it too. Now I feel much better about how this place is
working and I’m no longer placed at the bottom (My diary note from conversation with teacher, 2009).

I continued to work with staff and community to counter racism by questioning and exploring racist comments from teachers and maintaining discussions on these reactions.\(^{46}\) I now understand that racism in schools can operate in many subtle forms, and that staff can become unconscious of its operation and unaware that they may be maintaining and perpetuating racist practices (Baquedano-Lopez et al., 2013).

As I had become more knowledgeable of the field and of the connection between theory and practice, my leadership habitus was developing and I was more responsive to the parent community’s needs. I was able to combine professional skill and personal judgement to work with the school community to develop parent involvement practices that benefited the students and community. I was able to identify what needed to be done to build parent involvement, when to do it and how it could be done with the support of staff, parents and community members (Day et al., 2009; Waters et al., 2003). Furthermore, despite the initial ‘rituals of cooperation’ from staff and the low level of staff resistance, I was mindful not to reproduce any of the leadership strategies and practices that had not improved parent involvement or that did not take account of the needs of a CALD school community (Fullan, 2011; Lareau & Weininger, 2003). Obsolete practices included holding parent meetings without interpreters and ignoring racist comments. At the end of this second phase of leadership, there was an increased parent presence in the school and evidence that the possibilities and the roles parents could occupy were expanding at Norton PS. Parents could now be decision makers and be welcome in the school field. During the first phase, I was focused on the leadership of parent involvement; during this second phase I began to lead for parent involvement. Indeed, parent involvement was becoming more integrated into the culture of the school, with growing evidence of distributed leadership.

**Phase 3: 2011–2014**

Day et al. (2009) have referred to this third phase of school leadership as an enrichment phase. At Norton PS, this occurred when the principal and the leadership team further addressed the curriculum, environment and the culture of the school, leaving their personal mark. In this phase, as principal, my main objectives for enrichment were the integration of parent involvement through the distribution of leadership across the school.

During this phase, I used my leadership skills, accessed a range of established partnerships, and employed the established practices and protocols to support parent involvement, including specific

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\(^{46}\) See Scholarly Paper 2 for a full discussion on the impact of power and doxa.
planning, budget, community consultation and some evaluation. In addition, I had learnt a great deal about operating a change agenda in a school from my work during the earlier two phases of leadership. Beyond my professional and personal skills, I had commenced a professional doctorate focused on parent involvement for a CALD community and was developing a new scholarly perspective on parent involvement.

Up to this point, my actions had been informed by my leadership experience, a personal and professional commitment to the benefits of parent involvement and the ability to assess and respond directly to the needs of the school. My developing scholarship resulted in a deeper understanding of the purposes and benefits of parent involvement and its impact on student learning and school culture. I had also developed some theoretical knowledge of how the Norton PS field could operate to activate or limit parents’ actions in their attempts to be involved in their children’s school and learning, particularly in a CALD community (Bourdieu, 1973; Lamont & Lareau, 1988; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003). From this point, I reflected on my leadership actions through a scholarly lens. This interpretative lens impacted my analysis of day-to-day events and the use of data.

At this time there was also a change in staff practices. Staff members were now initiating discussion, recommending changes, and leading practice for parent involvement. This input from staff provided a deeper source of understanding, knowledge and expertise as the basis of leadership for parent involvement in the school. I began to rely on staff experience and their in-depth cultural knowledge to support appropriate, culturally-sensitive leadership in this complex multicultural field.

**Leadership practices**

During this third phase, the impact of leadership is best explored by considering the impact of distributed leadership across the school, as demonstrated by the actions of different members of the community. These leadership actions showed qualities and considerations that supported parent involvement. At this time, the distribution of leadership was responsive to the mobilisation of the culture and cultural practices of the staff as we built new meanings of diversity and leadership at the school (Leithwood & Riehl; 2003). This was in response to the evolving and activated habitus and capital of occupants in this changing field (Yang, 2014). Significant to the development of distributed leadership at this time is the change in the staff demographic over the previous six-year period. The staff members were now more representative of the school demographic, with a growing number of teachers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This change in the Norton PS staffing demographic is a reflection of both the number of students from CALD backgrounds who are accessing a university education and undertaking teacher education and the fact that a number of
teacher education students who had worked at the school in a voluntary capacity or as part of their professional experience were interested in working permanently at the school.

During this phase, both teachers and parents took the opportunity to exercise their interest in leadership and used their capacity to lead. For example, teachers assumed responsibility for coordinating a number of parent activities including the Dads’ (Maths) Games Night, parent curriculum information sessions (twice per term) and updating the school website to incorporate parent requests. Teachers also became cultural leaders and cultural role models initiating practices that reflected cultural sensitivity and respect.47 Parents were also demonstrating leadership capability and activating and displaying their habitus and cultural capital at the school (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). This included coordinating meetings, joining committees and continuing to make requests and recommendations. The following examples of shared leadership strongly reflect teacher and parent leadership and the capacity of the Norton PS field to respond to the needs of the community.

Example 1: Challenge of the playground during Ramadan

In former years, a significant problem had developed in the playground at lunchtime during the month of Ramadan. While children elected to fast during Ramadan, playground problems emerged as students were tired and could be argumentative, resulting in increased fighting. In response to the needs of the field, a pro-active group of Muslim teachers proposed to resolve this playground problem by organising and implementing a Prayer Room at lunchtime, thus creating a culturally-appropriate space for children. The teachers identified their goal and its challenges, and sought my support. The staff proposed to create a quiet space for children to pray and listen to stories from the Koran. Following our meeting, these teachers organised a roster, explained their strategy to the staff during a meeting and sought their support, advertised the program to the students and informed the parent community. At the end of Ramadan they evaluated their strategy. The Prayer Room successfully catered for the Muslim students in the school (68 per cent). It was well attended and led to a decrease in playground problems at this time. In addition to a marked drop in aggressive behaviour, there was also a shared pride from the students and teachers in their work together.

These teachers employed their knowledge, habitus and capital to make culturally-appropriate adjustments to the field. As a result, the needs of all occupants were met, a solution was developed and a new way of resolving problems was explored. Significantly, the teachers were drawing on their habitus developed in the family environment in a generative way that was supported by the field (Bourdieu, 2007). Through professional learning and discussion, supported by changing organisational structures, the field had changed and there was space for cultural diversity to be

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47 This was discussed in Scholarly Paper 2.
accepted. These teachers were changing the field and the operation of leadership in the field were activating their habitus and mobilising their cultural capital. The teachers’ leadership was being accepted and endorsed by the field. While this example is not specifically directed to a parent program, it indirectly involved parents and demonstrates distributed leadership and a valuing of the culture of the many families and staff.

Example 2: Parents as leaders – the Good Neighbour program

As noted earlier, with the exception of the P&C meetings, there had been few formal opportunities for parent leadership at the school. During this third leadership phase, parents had the opportunity to use their knowledge of the community and of school processes to become leaders in the school. A partner organisation offered to implement a new program and train parents whose children had been at the school for a few years to become parent leaders through participation in the Good Neighbour program. The goal of this program was to have current parents welcome new families to the school. Volunteers were sought from established parents to train as good neighbours and support parents new to the school. Six parents, all mothers, participated in a training program of four sessions and built or enhanced their skills. A Good Neighbour welcomes parents of a similar language or cultural background to the school, explaining school protocols and answering any questions the new parent may have. Considering the high turnover of new families each year, this program was a suitable response to the community’s needs. As a school, we celebrated the Good Neighbour program by introducing the team at Multicultural Day. Supported in the field, these parents simultaneously changed the field and were being changed by it by developing a leadership habitus and activating their social and cultural capital by supporting other parents (Lingard & Christie, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). Now a Good Neighbour welcomes new parents to the school and continues to support new parents as required. Due to the success of the program, additional parents have volunteered to become Good Neighbours.

I would like to thank you for giving us the opportunity for the project, Good Neighbour (Card from a parent at the end of the training program. September, 2010).

Example 3: Parent Teacher Action Team

A further example of distributed leadership at the school was the establishment of a Parent Teacher Action Team (PTAT) (Epstein et al., 2010). This group was formed with volunteer parents, teachers and a member of a partner organisation to address the findings from the interviews conducted during PPI 2. The team considered the community’s findings regarding the operation of parent involvement and recommended ways the school community (parents, teachers, students and
community partners) could address the matters identified. The suggestions that emerged from the PTAT discussions were practical and straightforward ideas that addressed the identified issues. These ideas did not generally require significant additional funding. Examples of these recommendations included: the school could support more effective communication and parents’ English proficiency simply by teachers making more time for discussion with parents and speaking a little slower. A further recommendation was for the school to create opportunities for parents to practise their English together. The parents’ need for more information regarding curriculum and available community services could be addressed by the school continuing parent curriculum sessions and placing more information on the school websites with links to other useful websites. The PTAT established a recommended timeline for actions. Significantly, all of the agreed actions and recommendations that emerged from this discussion were shared across the community and followed up. The PTAT now meet each term, and as a result of the success of their work and the impact of their actions, other parents and teachers have asked to join the PTAT.

Acts of leadership

During this third phase of leadership of parent involvement, leadership did not belong only to those with formal power; leadership was shared across different people in multiple locations and roles in the field. Though only a small number of parents were occupying positions of leadership at the school, these parents were from different cultural and language backgrounds and were taking up opportunities or creating opportunities to lead in the school field. Interestingly, these parents, generally women, had good English skills and had formed relationships with each other through attending the same activities at the school. In addition to the examples provided above, parents also took opportunities to lead in the form of volunteering, for programs such as the Leapfrogs kindergarten orientation program, producing a parent cookbook and shaping the parents’ activity program through their recommendations. These examples demonstrate that the conditions operating in the field acknowledged and accepted the efforts of parents to lead (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). During a Parent Teacher Action Team meeting, a mother’s offer to run sewing classes was met with enthusiasm and seen as an opportunity to build skills and create relationships. The mother who initiated the classes later said to me:

I was sitting in darkness in a cave and now you have turned on the light for me. I have light in my life (My diary note, August, 2014)

Importantly, this mother ‘turned on the light’ for herself and activated her habitus. This was made possible by the opportunities in the field and the acceptance of her habitus from the field.

See Professional Practice Initiative 2 for the full discussion of findings.
Reflection on Phase 3

A significant change was noticeable during this third phase of leadership; my repertoire of leadership practices was informed by my growing scholarship, the use of theory and the insights collected from the school community.49

While only a small number of examples of distributed leadership have been discussed, these instances of everyday leadership demonstrate the impact of an activated habitus – in this case a leadership habitus activated in response to the changes in the field (Yang, 2014). These examples of leadership demonstrate what Bourdieu refers to as the generative capacity of occupants’ habitus (2007). They also demonstrate effective distributed leadership. Importantly, these creative solutions introduced to meet the needs and challenges that existed in the Norton PS field were developed not by those in formal leadership positions; rather, they were developed by the teaching staff, a partner organisation and parents and teachers working together. Of particular interest in reflecting on these examples of leadership is the fact that each strategy required effective communication, support from a partner organisation and suitable organisational arrangements to be successful. Additionally, these leadership initiatives were also facilitated through the connections between home and school, parent decision-making and staff skill supported through professional learning.

I had developed a leadership habitus in the school that was strengthened by many factors including a demonstrated commitment to the school, relationships with staff and parents supported by established communication protocols and strong external partnerships. It was during this third phase of leadership that I was also able to integrate the knowledge gained from both Professional Practice Initiatives. This knowledge was directly related to the school context, and as such, provided powerful information to further inform my practice. Based on my knowledge and understanding of leadership in this field, it was possible to share leadership effectively with staff and parents. The examples of parent and teacher leadership during this phase showed responsive solutions to complex problems based on a cultural understanding of the field.

From a Bourdieusian perspective, the distribution of leadership provided the opportunity for both parents and staff to demonstrate and further develop their capital in the school developing parent initiatives that were accepted by the school community. The field was changing in response to the development of distributed leadership for parent involvement. This was significant for parents as their efforts were acknowledged and accepted broadly and they were able to demonstrate and activate their capital and occupy a variety of spaces, including a leadership space in the field (Baquedano-López et al., 2013; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003). At the same time,

49 (PPI 2) Why is this here? Say how it relates to the text.
staff had the opportunity to integrate their knowledge of teaching and learning with their developing leadership habitus. This opportunity for staff and parents to be in different spaces – including leadership spaces – created change, empowered the community and limited the operation of institutionalised racism (Crozier, 2001).

Final reflection

Throughout this systematic reflection across three phases of leadership at Norton PS, a number of significant leadership changes were identified that led to the gradual embedding of parent involvement into the school culture. This PPI was framed by two research questions. The first of these was: What leadership strategies in the school support parent involvement? A number of leadership strategies supportive of parent involvement for a CALD community were identified across the three phases of leadership. These were communication; acknowledgement of parents’ role; making connections with the community; teacher professional learning; distributed leadership, and including parents as decision makers. Changes in leadership practices also led to a reduction of school barriers to parent involvement and challenges that restrict parent involvement. The leadership practices changed subtly at each phase as indicated below.

Communication practices were introduced across the three phases that were responsive to the needs of the parent community including the increased availability of staff and the leadership team who were available every afternoon for conversations with parents in the playground. A change in the style of communication was also identified with additional information for parents provided in the newsletter and the introduction of community consultation. While two-way communication strategies increased, they continued to be limited and did not extend beyond informal conversations before and after school. The introduction of the Good Neighbour program is an exception. This initiative gave parents an opportunity to lead communication in the school reflecting their possession of power and made them visible in the school field (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). It also gave parents’ direct input into leadership and addressed some of the barriers parents may face when new to the school.

Beyond the acknowledgement of parents in the newsletter, increased attempts were made to acknowledge parents role by seeking their input into school activities. The formation and work of the Parent Teacher Action Team (PTAT) was also an acknowledgement of parents’ roles and provided additional opportunities for parents to be at the school demonstrating their habitus and building their cultural capital (Grenfell, 2012; Mills & Gale, 2007, 2010). The Teacher Professional Learning (TPL) team continued their work on culturally-appropriate input supporting parent involvement and demonstrating leadership.
Strong connections with community partners continued and the number of partnerships increased across the three phases of leadership. Partners were initiating activities and there was an increase in the number and type of activities operating for parents, and an increase in the number of parents at the school. The activities were better suited to the parents’ needs, or were bespoke activities often initiated in response to parent requests (Carreon, Drake & Barton, 2005; Desforges & Abouchaar, 2003; Lopez et al., 2001; Turney & Kao, 2009; Wong & Hughes, 2006). Some parents were also going beyond the school and attending courses and taking up opportunities in the community.

Clearly, barriers to parent involvement and school-based challenges continued. Based on this reflection at Norton PS, the barriers to parent involvement were noted at each phase, and require ongoing resolution. During the first phase of leadership, the major complexities impacting on parent involvement were: my naïve understanding of the CALD school community and their needs; lack of understanding of parent involvement across the school community; and staff resistance and their lack of skills in working with parents. On a practical level, communication protocols and organisation considerations including time, space and child care were challenges to be managed. Lack of resources, both financial and skills based were also significant challenges at this time, but were resolved to a degree through planning and communication strategies.

During the second phase, there was a shift in the challenges to implementation of parent involvement. While progress had been made and protocols established, I was challenged by the lack of resources and suitable staff skill at this time. On reflection, I realised that I required input from community organisations in order to implement a range of suitable parent programs. The third phase saw these challenges being addressed to some degree with the distribution of leadership, the input from community organisations and the use of information collected through community input. While many of the complexities associated with a CALD school were addressed in a way that increased parent involvement, others will inevitably appear that will benefit from distributed leadership in the field.

The second area of inquiry was: What opportunities exist for distributed leadership and leadership capacity building? Opportunities for distributed leadership increased across the three phases of leadership, progressing from staff and parents being invited to participate in opportunities to staff and parents initiating activities themselves. Leadership practices that supported these opportunities initially took the form of subtle acts of leadership such as listening to the needs of the community, inviting the involvement of the staff and parents and seeking opportunities beyond the school (Jeynes, 2011). The reflection also highlighted the opportunities for leadership capacity building in the school. The distribution of leadership was possible through capacity building for teachers via
professional learning, and for parents through learning by their presence in the field, together with the acknowledgement and acceptance of parents’ activation of their capital (Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Lingard & Christie, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2003). These leadership initiatives include a parent-run sewing group and parents co-presenting at the Meet the Teacher sessions. Teachers demonstrated their leadership in a range of ways, including establishing new relationships with community organisations, planning Teacher Professional Learning and organising a prayer room during Ramadan. Norton PS field adapted in a way that facilitated the movement of occupants to different parts of the field and into different roles, making distributed leadership possible. The work of teachers and the efforts of parents as leaders were equally accepted in this field further reflecting the acceptance of distributed leadership. This work promotes the integration of knowledge on leadership with the research on parent involvement and moves from ‘what’ to do to ‘how’ to do it. In so doing, it contributes to the field by making this information accessible to all practitioners.

Leading parent involvement in a school is complex and there are no formulaic solutions to identifying appropriate leadership strategies in a CALD community. A deep understanding of the specific school context, together with skill and knowledge to support the development of distributed leadership is required. Significantly, my leadership habitus and the practices that were part of this habitus were invisible or hidden from me in the early stages of this reflection; the practices had been unconscious leadership behaviours or hidden acts. The impact of collecting information and reflecting on parent involvement promoted the identification of effective practice in the field. Furthermore, my leadership actions, as informed by Bourdieu (1973), made my unconscious leadership actions conscious. Reflection on the range of information collected at the school allowed me to see and assess the impact of my leadership on the field and note the changes in my leadership habitus. The activation of my social capital promoted relationships with community partners that enriched the parent-involvement activities. As Robinson (2007) has suggested, leadership is not built on heroic deeds, but rather on the simple daily tasks that often need to be identified or addressed and supported to create effective practices in the field (Jeynes, 2011). Through scholarship and research-based practice, I now consider my leadership to be evidence based, relational, innovative and responsive to a changing field.

Based on this reflection, four significant complexities arose that impact on the implementation of parent involvement for CALD parents.

1. difficulties of integrating parent involvement into a school field
2. lack of capacity of the school as an organisation to integrate practices effectively
3. the operation of institutionalised racism (Crozier, 2001)
4. a commitment of resources required to develop a responsive, effective parent-involvement program.

These complexities have proved to be more significant impediments to the implementation of parent involvement than many organisational barriers identified in the literature. These have been, to some degree, addressed at Norton PS through appropriate organisational structures (Bezzina, 2007; Zyngier, 2003), such as planning, evidence-based leadership and the progressive distribution of leadership.

A major contention of this investigation is that the research literature on parent involvement generally identifies ‘what’ to do, and cautions the practitioner about the barriers that prevent effective implementation. The findings from this PPI suggest the ‘how’ of parent involvement, and identifies possible effective practices. In this field, leadership is the key that has the capacity and power to integrate ‘what’ to do and ‘how’ to inform effective parent-involvement practice. At Norton PS it was the gradual distribution of leadership that promoted leadership responsive to the needs of the school community.

Conclusion

This analysis reflected on and evaluated the leadership strategies I mobilised at Norton PS to integrate parent involvement into the school culture over three phases of leadership noting, in particular, the actions that facilitated parent involvement and those that acted as barriers. It is clear from this reflection that establishing effective leadership practices and changing a school culture requires time, intention and evaluation, in addition to knowledge, skill and experience (Leithwood, et al., 2006; Robinson, 2007; Waters et al., 2003). Leadership sensitive to the context and the needs of the community can scaffold a transition process for parents to occupy an active position in the field, for teachers to learn of the impact of their relationships with parents, and for all occupants in the field to develop productive relationships.

This systematic reflection and evaluation of my leadership for parent involvement across three phases sought to address a gap in the research regarding the relationship between leadership and parent involvement for a CALD community. This reflection on the often ‘hidden work’ of leadership has identified a number of practical strategies and practices that leaders can use to support a CALD community. It has also highlighted how informed and distributed leadership can mediate the complexities of the everyday and often taken for granted practices of any particular field.
### Glossary of Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual School Report (ASR)</strong></td>
<td>is a mandatory document required by all government schools to report to their community and includes information regarding student outcomes, financial reporting and major school events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD)</strong></td>
<td>is used to describe people whose first language is one other than English, or those who identify as coming from a diverse backgrounds or their parents’ identify for a similar reason. This is a diverse and complex group coming from different cultures and countries.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Liaison Officer (CLO)</strong></td>
<td>is a member of staff who is a fluent speaker of one or more community languages employed with the specific task of supporting relationships between the school and parents and community members from CALD backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>ESL</strong></td>
<td>English as a second language                                                                 ---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau</strong></td>
<td>a Commonwealth government project focused on enhancing relationships between home and school through research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leapfrogs Kindergarten Orientation Program</strong></td>
<td>a ten-session kindergarten orientation program for children and parents providing an opportunity for participants to learn about the school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good Neighbour program</strong></td>
<td>a parent leadership program: parents of a similar language or cultural background welcome new families to the school explaining school protocols and answering any questions the new parent may have.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multicultural Playgroup</strong></td>
<td>is a playgroup operated by a community partner that is held in the school hall each week. This playgroup offers developmental play activities and informal support for parents.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Assessment Program for Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN)</strong></td>
<td>Nationwide compulsory literacy and numeracy testing program.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National Network of Partnership Schools</strong></td>
<td>a network of schools, families and community groups working together to support student learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Norton PS</strong></td>
<td>an abbreviation for Norton Public School, a fictitious name for a public school (primary ) in South Western Sydney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parent Teacher Action Team</strong></td>
<td>a volunteer group of parents and teachers who work together to improve communication between home and school and develop initiatives that help parents to participate in their children’s education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Public School (PS)</strong></td>
<td>Government co-educational primary school catering for children aged 5 to 12 years, as in Norton PS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Engagement Roundtable</td>
<td>is a biannual national information sharing opportunity for practitioners to share best practice in Family-School relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parent and Community (P&amp;C)</td>
<td>a formal meeting held at the school each month for parents and community members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PPI</td>
<td>is the acronym for Professional Practice Initiative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ramadan</td>
<td>is the holy month of religious observation for Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School as a Community Centre (SACC)</td>
<td>operates programs for parents and their children from birth to seven with the goal of supporting parents and helping them form networks and relationships in their community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA)</td>
<td>was developed by the Commonwealth government to categorise the socio-economic status of an area: a low SEIFA indicates low socio-economic status (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Plan</td>
<td>is a document detailing the major school initiatives over a three-year period.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio-economic status (SES)</td>
<td>is the measurement of the level of a combination of education, income and occupation to determine the social standing or class of a group (or area in this case).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>is the acronym for scholarly paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Representative Council (SRC)</td>
<td>are elected student representatives – one representative from each class. Students discuss matters of interest to them including playground, library and uniforms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical and Further Education (TaFE)</td>
<td>government educational facilities providing technical and trades training for post school students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher Professional Learning (TPL)</td>
<td>ongoing teacher learning generally organised and implemented at the school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triple P Parenting</td>
<td>or the Positive Parenting program is a seven-week program designed for parents and explores positive parenting strategies for three- to five-year olds. This program has been translated into a number of community languages including Arabic, Bengla and Vietnamese. Sometimes referred to in text as Triple P Parenting in Bangla.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term Planner</td>
<td>is a record of all activities held at the school each term.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wogs</td>
<td>a derogatory term used to describe people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 1: Presentations and Conferences

Conference for Aspiring Leaders
NSW Department of Education
December 2012
Presentation: Engaging the wider school community

South West Sydney Primary Principals Association
NSW Department of Education
February 2013
Presentation: Reconceptualising parent involvement in a culturally and linguistically diverse community: the view for principals

Partnership Officers Training Day
NSW Department of Education
June 2013
Presentation: Key considerations for effective community work

National Parental Engagement Roundtable
Australian Council of State School Organisations
September 2013
Presentation: Reconceptualising parent involvement in a culturally and linguistically diverse community: an Australian experience

The Federation of Catholic School Parent Communities Annual Conference
Adelaide May 2014
Presentation: Working together: building–home school relationships in a multicultural community

Rethinking Multicultural Education: Research, Policy, Practice
Western Sydney University
November 2014
Presentation: Community assets, education partners

Professional Learning Partners
Sydney University May 2015
Presentation: Working together: building home–school relationships in a multicultural community
Appendix 2: Focus Group and Semi-structured Interview Questions

Community focus group

• What can the school do to support parents and teachers working together to support the children’s learning?

Student focus group

• How important is it for parents to be involved in their children’s education?
• Why do your parents come to school?
• How often do your parents come to school?
• If there is one thing that we could do at school for parents, what would you recommend?

Semi-structured interviews

Teachers and School Administration Officer

• How you think teachers and parents can work effectively together for children’s best interests?
• How important do you think it is for parents to be involved in their children’s education?
• In using this term ‘parent involvement’, what does that mean? What do you understand by the term?
• What do you consider the best ways for parents to be involved in their children’s education?
• What things should the school be doing to support parent involvement?

Parents

• How important do you think it is for parents to be involved in their children’s education?
• In what ways could the school be supporting you as a parent?
• Do you think there are reasons that stop parents from coming to school?
• Is there anything else the school could be doing so that parents and the school could work together?

Community members

• How important it is for parents to be involved in their children’s education?
• What are the most effective ways for parents to be involved in their children’s education?
• What do you think might impact on parents’ level of comfort in schools?
• What could the school be doing to ensure parents and the school work better together?
## Appendix 3: Data Collection Schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Source of data</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Communicating with parents</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>newsletters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>messages for parents during assemblies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal</td>
<td>parent comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parent queries to staff in front office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>principal diary notes and personal reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Acknowledging parents role and making connections in learning between home and school</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>meet the teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parent teacher meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>invitations to parents to school functions &amp; curriculum sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>homework centre</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Facilitating parent decision-making</td>
<td>P&amp;C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parents request maths homework program, additional information</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Implementing teacher professional learning</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>informal learning &amp; discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Connecting with the community</td>
<td>multicultural playgroup</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>parent English &amp; computer classes</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Distributing or sharing leadership of parent involvement</td>
<td>Not apparent</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Limiting the barriers</td>
<td>Not obvious</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 4: Attendance Records

Annual Meet the Teacher program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Early Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 1</th>
<th>Stage 2</th>
<th>Stage 3</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Attendance at activities (Term 2, 2009)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Wk</th>
<th>Parent English Classes</th>
<th>Homework Club</th>
<th>Multicultural Playgroup</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beginners</td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>Stage 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>N/A</td>
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