Cultural perspectives of a Lutheran primary school

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Glossary

Accreditation	Professional learning programs about Lutheran theology, which staff in Lutheran education are required to undertake so they develop understandings of Lutheran theology.
Christian	A follower of Jesus Christ and his teachings.
Christian education	This is the holistic perspective or total life of the Lutheran school or Early Childhood Service experience.
Christian Studies	A formal subject area in Lutheran schools and Early Childhood Services where students learn about Christianity.
Connect	A professional learning program for teachers in Lutheran schools and Early Childhood Services to explore Lutheran theology in their context of education.
Culture	Culture is defined as the norms, rituals, values and beliefs, signs and symbols that are evident in the environment.
Equip	A professional learning program for teachers of Christian Studies in Lutheran schools and Early Childhood Services, which provides understanding and support for teaching Christian Studies.
Formation (al)	The hoped for shaping or forming, and growth in knowledge and understanding of one's faith and belief.
Gospel	The 'good news' that the life and teachings of Jesus Christ are revealed through the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John in the Bible.
Lutheran	A follower of the teachings of Martin Luther and a member of the Lutheran church. 'Lutheran' is a branch of Christianity.
Lutheran education	The experience of education in a Lutheran school or Early Childhood Service which is underpinned by beliefs, relationships and practices from a Lutheran perspective.
Ministry	Ministry refers to growing and encouraging the faith of believers of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This happens through the Lutheran school as an agency of the Lutheran church. May also be known as 'nurture'.
Mission	Mission is the work of every Christian, congregation and church agency. Lutheran schools are agencies of the Lutheran church. Mission involves introducing non-believers to Jesus Christ as God's Son, in the hope they will be brought to faith, and believe and follow God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. May also be known as 'outreach'.
Practice architectures	Practice architectures are the conditions that exist to make practices possible.
Socialisation	The process where people interact with others and in so doing, they learn the skills, values, behaviours and understandings of a cultural group or organisation.
Theology	The study of the Bible as God's Word and story.

List of abbreviations

ABS — Australian Bureau of Statistics

ACARA — Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority

ALC — Australian Lutheran College

COVID-19 — Coronavirus disease

ECS — Early Childhood Services

HDR — Higher Degree Research

LCA — Lutheran Church of Australia

LEA — Lutheran Education Australia

LEQ — Lutheran Education Queensland

LESNW — Lutheran Education South Australia, Northern Territory, Western Australia

LEVNT — Lutheran Education Victoria, New South Wales, Tasmania

LSA — Lutheran Schools Association (now LESNW)

NAPLAN — National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy

NT — Northern Territory

PEI — Photo elicitation interviews

PMA — Practices and material arrangements

SA — South Australia

TPA — Theory of practice architectures

UNESCO — The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

UNCRC — United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

VAB — Values, attitudes and beliefs

WA — Western Australia

Declaration

I certify that this thesis:

1. does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university;

2. the research within will not be submitted for any other future degree or diploma without the permission of Flinders University; and

3. to the best of my knowledge and belief, does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signature: Susan Kupke
               2 October 2023

Abstract

It has been more than 20 years since Lutheran school cultural research by Marks (2000) was conducted in Queensland Lutheran schools involving adults. While my research fills a gap due to the limited Lutheran school cultural research in Australia and internationally, it is significant that for the first time, the voices of seven to twelve-year-old students are included on the cultural perspectives of a Lutheran primary school.

As a single, ethnographic case study, this research explored students', staff and parents' perceptions of what contributes to the culture of a Lutheran primary school in South Australia, to illuminate how they shape and are shaped by the culture/s of their school. As the main method, photo elicitation interviews enabled participants to take photographs of aspects of the school they perceived as being special and then explain why their photographs were special for them. Other methods included an interview, the researcher reflective journal, and documents and artefacts.

Six main practices were illuminated as findings through the analysis of data, which used Values Coding (Saldaña, 2016). These were the cultural practices of achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community. Through these findings, the influence of socialisation on the school's culture was revealed.

A major outcome of this research illuminated through photo elicitation interviews, was that the perspectives of students were noticeably different from those of the adults. While the research provides current knowledge for the Lutheran education context, it brings the work on practice architectures of Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) together with Schatzki's (2005) work on site ontology to contribute a new perspective of understanding culture.

The outcomes of this research will be available for others to consider as relevant to their own contexts. It is hoped that other schools and systems will be encouraged to engage in future, additional research on school cultural perspectives in Australia and internationally.

Acknowledgement

I am extremely grateful to have had the support of both my supervisors throughout this doctoral journey – Associate Professor Kerry Bissaker and Doctor Bev Rogers. Their professionalism, vision, guidance and encouragement over the years has been unconditional.

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Most importantly, thank you to my family - Craig, Cooper and Jaslyn, for your endless patience and interest in my research and progress, and your love and care for me throughout this journey.

1   Introduction to this research

Little research has previously been conducted in Lutheran schools in Australia or America. In particular, research into the culture of Lutheran schools is almost non-existent. (Marks, 2000, p. 308)

1.1   Background to this research

Over 20 years ago, Marks (2000) made this statement in his thesis following his exploration of the culture of Queensland Lutheran schools. To this day in Australia and internationally, there continues to be a paucity of research literature focusing on the culture of Lutheran schools and, in particular, research that includes students' perspectives on their school's culture. My research invited students, staff and parents to share their perspectives on what they believed contributed to and reflected a Lutheran school culture, while also bridging the 20-year gap of cultural research in Lutheran education.

1.2   Researcher's interest

My first encounters with Lutheran education began while studying to be a teacher. Since that time, my employment has been in three Australian Lutheran schools and, more recently, in a regional office of Lutheran education. I developed a curiosity and interest in the culture of one Lutheran school nearly 20 years ago. Parents shared with me that it was different to other systems and sectors and commented:

> There is something special here … I haven't connected with church stuff since I was a child. (Personal communication, 2007)

It is different and I want my child to be part of this school. (Personal communication, 2007)

In my current regional Lutheran education office role, I have opportunities to regularly interact with staff new to the Lutheran system through the facilitation of workshops with leaders and teachers of Christian Studies[1]. New staff openly comment that the Lutheran system is 'different', has a 'feel' which they like and of which they want to be a part. These experiences are acknowledged because they have generated the interest and desire for this research into the culture of a Lutheran school.

Culture is a complex word used in many ways which reflect differing concepts (Wadham et al., 2007). To set the scene for this research, a definition follows that influenced my framing of the research. School culture is defined as the norms, rituals, values and beliefs, signs and symbols that are evident in the school environment and shaped by the school's history and traditions. They are of influence to, and influenced by, the humans in that environment (Collie, 2017; Deal & Peterson, 2016b; Donnelly, 2000; Ervin, 2019; Ryan, 2010).

1.3   Rationale and significance of the research

I believe this research provides a reference and is relevant for Lutheran schools and other education systems and sectors such as the Independent sector, faith-based schools and state schools. As noted in the previous section, there is limited research on the culture of Lutheran schools. By conducting in-depth research on the cultural perspectives of students, staff and parents of one Lutheran school, a more current understanding of the culture of this one school is generated. The outcomes of this research will be available for others to

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1 Christian Studies is a formal curriculum area in Lutheran education. Chapter Three (Section 3.5) provides further explanation of this curriculum area.

consider as relevant to their own contexts, which will hopefully encourage future, additional research on Lutheran school culture.

This research is important for the Australian Lutheran education system and the regional offices that are part of this system because little research exists on the culture of Lutheran schools in Australia or internationally. The research that does exist is over 20 years old. My research fills a gap by providing current cultural perspectives on a school.

While research and literature exist on the influences of leadership and teachers on the culture of schools, it is limited in relation to the perspectives of students. This research, for the first time, brings to light the perspectives of seven to twelve-year-old students through photo elicitation interviews (PEI).

1.4   Purpose of the research

The research explored the cultural expressions of one Lutheran primary school in South Australia (SA) from the perspectives of students, staff and parents. In addition, and as explored further in Chapter Three, it brings new insights to how the meaning of culture is interpreted as it considers the blended nature of practice architectures and site ontologies in the school (Schatzki, 2005; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).

1.5   Research questions

The overarching question for this research was, *How might community members of one Lutheran primary school in SA shape, and become shaped by, the culture/s of their school?* The guiding sub-questions included:

- How do students, staff and parents reflect on and describe aspects of their school that they find special?

- How do the students', staff and parents' reflections and descriptions differ or align?

- How do the students', staff and parents' reflections and descriptions connect with the vision and mission statements of the school and the Lutheran Church of Australia?

- How do the students, staff and parents' perspectives interact to reflect the culture/s evident in the school?

- Emerging from the research, how has the school's culture/s developed and influenced the students, staff and parents?

1.6   Research design

The research is a case study of one Lutheran primary school in SA. Data were gathered using photo elicitation interviews (PEI) (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Collier, 1957; Pink, 2013; Rasmussen, 2014), field notes kept in the researcher reflective journal (Kemmis et al., 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014) and school documents and artefacts (Bowen, 2009; Holliday, 2016). PEI were conducted with students, staff and parents, with more than half the participants being students. Data were analysed and coded using values coding (Saldaña, 2016) and summarised to illuminate findings through the photographs and text into six cultural perspectives or practices.

1.7   The language of culture

The concept of culture is central to this research. Researchers from Europe, including the United Kingdom, used the word 'culture' when defining the enduring nature of the school environment. However, American and Australasian researchers adopted the word 'climate' (Glover & Coleman, 2005). Prosser (1999) noted, "[b]y the early 1980s the terms school

ethos, climate, culture, atmosphere and tone were ubiquitous" (p. 3). In addition, Glover and Coleman (2005) substituted words such as climate, ethos, environment and atmosphere for culture, with each term providing nuances relative to culture. Other researchers recognised the complexity in finding a suitable definition that was comprehensive enough for this concept because of the different ways that culture was used and perceived (Bell & Kent, 2010; Sackmann, 2016). While some aspects of culture were more enduring, other features of culture included the day-to-day temperature of an organisation. Understandings of 'culture' have changed over time using differing terms that include atmosphere, climate, environment, ethos and identity. In further exploring culture, literature on practices, practice architectures and site ontologies revealed different perspectives related to culture that are of relevance to this research.

1.8   Practices and site ontologies

While differing theories are applied to society and how it functions, practices exist everywhere. Practices are regular actions that have purpose; they consist of smaller interconnected activities involving people (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). Hui et al. (2017) propose that:

> practices consist in organised sets of actions, that practices link to form wider
> complexes and constellations … and that this nexus forms the 'basic domain of study
> of the social sciences' (Giddens, 1984, p. 123). (p. 1)

By focusing on and understanding practices and their complexities instead of the individuals engaged in practices, Welch and Warde (2015) explain that organised culture can be considered conceptually so that "key focal points become the organization of the practice and the moments of consumption enjoined" (Warde, 2005, p. 146).

Schatzki (2005) proposed the notion of 'site ontology' to describe practices as they happen and unfold in social life. 'Site' refers to the type of context or arena that surrounds a practice, which shapes the conditions in which that practice occurs (Schatzki, 2005; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). Schatzki's work places an emphasis on the "doings and sayings" (Schatzki, 2022, p. 131) of activities, and explains that the "site of social life is composed of a nexus of human practices and material arrangements" (p. 465). Practices refer to organised human activities. Material arrangements include the set ups of objects, including how humans, artefacts and organisms are ordered to provide the conditions for practices to happen (Schatzki, 2005, 2006). My research considers the significance of practices and material arrangements as they happen in the social life of the school.

Kemmis and Grootenboer's (2008) theory of practice architectures (TPA) is also used in my research to develop understandings of what practices are, how they are formed and effected, and how they relate or connect with other practices (Mahon et al., 2017). The TPA considers the language, actions and relationships of practices, and how they are conditioned by invisible social patterns and arrangements that can restrict or enable practices in a site (Kemmis et al., 2014; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). It extends the emphasis on the 'doings' and 'sayings' of practices from Schatzki's work to include 'relatings' (Kemmis, 2012; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016; Wilkinson, 2021). The "sayings, doings and relatings" (Kemmis, 2014, p. 47) of practices are interrelated, interconnected and influence each other. A more detailed discussion of the TPA continues in Chapter Three.

School culture encompasses climate and atmosphere, is affected by the environment, and defined by ethos as determined by the school's history and traditions that convey significant practices, artefacts and underlying assumptions (Deal & Peterson, 2016b; Ervin,

2019). The school's climate, atmosphere, environment and ethos infuse and are shaped by the school's activities and practices, and are revealed through the sayings, doings and relatings of these practices. The research questions illuminate what is special for the research participants through PEI and their shared stories. In doing so, they reveal the interrelated and interconnected nature of various practices with their respective sayings, doings and relatings for this Lutheran primary school.

1.9   An outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One introduces the purposes of the research, the research questions, and includes how the research is framed within practice architectures as site ontologies, which provides a way of looking at culture through practices. Chapter Two provides a history of Lutheran education in Australia that includes a summary of key theological concepts of the Lutheran church as they apply to schools. This is significant because Lutheran schools are founded on the beliefs, values and traditions of the Lutheran church, which shape the school's cultural experiences such as its practices, rituals, symbolism, beliefs and the relationships between people. Lutheran beliefs and values pervade practices within a Lutheran school.

Chapter Three includes a review of the literature on organisational and school culture, including a site ontological perspective of culture and the theory of practice architectures. This is followed by a review of literature on formal and informal curriculum, and discussion on the core Lutheran Education Australia documents that underpin Lutheran schools. Chapter Four explains the conceptual framework developed for the research. It also outlines the methodology for the research which includes photo elicitation interviews as the main method used.

The research findings are presented in two chapters. Chapter Five shares the findings from the student, staff and parent photographs and their related stories and identifies themes that begin to emerge. Chapter Six provides the findings from the textual data which includes six cultural practices of achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community that emerged from the entire research.

Chapter Seven includes a discussion of the significant outcomes. Some of these include the notable differences between student and adult perspectives, the value of PEI as a method, a new view of culture that brings together a site ontological perspective with practice architectures, and the influence of Lutheran theology through practice architectures. The concluding section of this chapter identifies the contribution of this research to knowledge and future research recommendations.

2 Research context

2.1 The Lutheran education context

This chapter sets the scene and context for the research by providing information about the Independent school sector and the Lutheran education system. A historical perspective of the beginnings of the Lutheran church and its schools in Australia follow, including Lutheran school growth and changes over time. Summaries of key Lutheran theological teachings of the church are also included as they apply to the Lutheran school context.

2.2 Independent school sector

In Australia, the school sector includes government and non-government schools in all Australian states and territories, with the non-government sector further grouped into Catholic schools and Independent schools.

Many Independent schools are affiliated with a religious denomination that include Anglican, Islamic and Lutheran. Other Independent schools provide an alternative educational philosophy such as Montessori or Steiner. Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022) census data for 2021 shows the distribution of schools and students across Australian education sectors in Figure 1. The proportion of schools and students in the Government sector is larger than the Catholic and Independent school sectors.
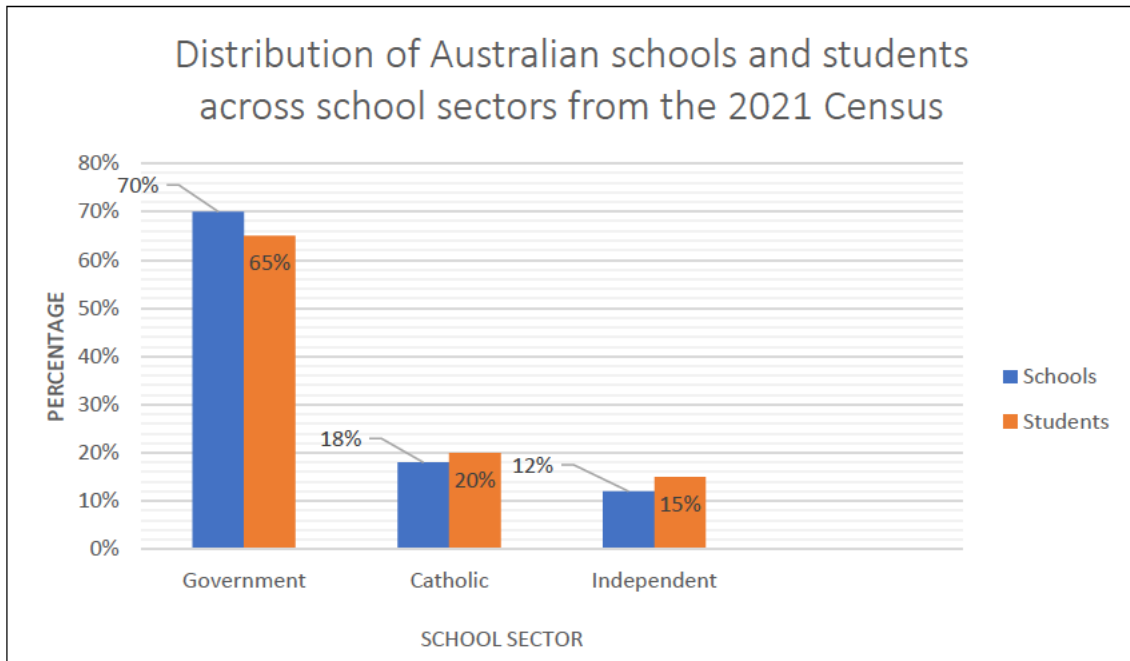
Figure 1 – Distribution of schools and students across school sectors (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2022)

2.3   Lutheran education

Lutheran education includes primary schools, secondary schools and colleges, and combined foundation to Year 12 colleges as part of the Independent schooling sector in Australia. Data from the 2021 Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) census together with data from Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022a), showed that Lutheran school student enrolments were more than 40,000, which is 7% of the national Independent schools sector. In addition, but not included in the Independent schools sector, there are approximately 4000 children enrolled in early childhood services who are affiliated with Lutheran education (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022d).

LEA represents the Lutheran sector nationally at government and independent levels and operates on behalf of the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). LEA works together with three regions that include Lutheran Education Queensland (LEQ), Lutheran Education South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia (LESNW), and Lutheran Education Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania (LEVNT). LEA supports the regions in various

capacities through the development and support of national resources, policies, procedures, administration, Lutheran education frameworks and the Christian Studies curriculum. Individual Lutheran schools and early years services are assisted by their regions for matters related to learning, improvement and innovation, Lutheran identity, community building and leading effective organisation and management (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016).

For the LCA, Lutheran schools are agencies of the church in mission and ministry. Therefore, the LCA has influence and expectations in relation to its schools which is explained in Lutheran Church of Australia (2016) policy statements:

> the LCA expects the Word of God with the gospel of Christ at its heart to inform all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities of the school.

The gospel of Christ is central to the beliefs, values, practices, traditions, activities and relationships that exist in Lutheran schools, which shape the school's culture. It is important to consider the history and origins of the Lutheran church in Australia, which were formational to the culture of Lutheran schools.

2.4   Lutheran church history

The Lutheran church originated in Germany in the early 1500s during the Protestant Reformation, which was a difficult yet significant time in Christian history. The Reformation was an era in world history during the 16th century led by Martin Luther (Luther). He was an Augustinian monk, theologian and university lecturer who spoke against, and began a renewal of, the teachings of the church in Germany (Androne, 2020; Sorensen, 2016). As he studied the Bible, he interpreted its message to be about God's overwhelming love for all people. Therefore, believers of God could be "saved by God's grace, through faith in Jesus Christ" (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2022a). This contrasted with the church

practices of the time that were established so people could be saved by their efforts to do good works that pleased God, or by paying money for indulgences to the church of the day.

To communicate and protest these differences, Luther identified 95 theses against the church teachings and nailed them to a church door in Wittenberg in Germany in 1517 (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2022a). He regularly taught, wrote and preached on these contrasting biblical interpretations. Later this became known as the Reformation period of the early church, which were often tumultuous times that caused conflict. Teachers, theologians and commoners flocked to hear Luther. While some people were united through his teachings, others disagreed, which caused dissension amongst Christians (Androne, 2020; Rex, 2017).

The teachings of Luther spread to many lands and countries over hundreds of years, despite dissension and persecution amongst people. Followers of Martin Luther's biblical interpretations became known as Lutherans and gradually formed the Lutheran church. These biblical interpretations, known as Lutheran theological beliefs, underpin the foundational beliefs of Lutheran schools and are explained later in this chapter.

Luther also highly valued learning. He appreciated opportunities to read and study the Bible in order to develop greater understandings of God's revelation. Bartsch (2015) explains:

> For Luther, the Word of God became foundational for all which he thought and did. And he saw education as critical for the spread of his theological insights and for the faith and life of the people … He wanted to help Christians link faith with daily life and carry worship out from the church and into the community. (p. 73)

Luther's ability to read, study and learn allowed him to become an advocate for the education of all children. He believed there were benefits to both the church and state in preparing people to be responsible citizens in the world (Bartsch, 2001, 2013; Salvarani, 2020).

Lutheran schools were built adjacent to Lutheran churches in German villages. Hauser (2003) explains that children's education was a requirement for church membership: "[i]t was compulsory on threat of church discipline that parishioners sent their children to the congregational school" (p. 113).

2.5   The Australian Lutheran church story

Approximately 300 years after Luther publicly declared his Ninety-Five Theses in Wittenberg (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2022a; Spears, 2011; Wengert, 2015), a group of German-Lutheran migrants and missionaries fled persecution in Germany for religious freedom (Whitehead, 2001; Zweck, 2013). One country they sailed to was Australia, where they initially settled from 1838 in South Australia and Queensland. While this marked the beginning of Lutheranism and the Lutheran church in Australia, by 1860 around 20 000 German-Lutherans had migrated to Australia (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2022b). Over time, the migrants expanded their settlements across the country to Victoria and New South Wales in search of parcels of land. They settled and survived from market garden produce, which for some included making wine from their vineyards (Leske, 1996).

As per their practice in Germany, the German-Lutheran people established villages in Australia, each with a church and congregational school. Migrating from a country where the education of children was highly important and "every child was expected to go to school" (Hauser, 2009, p. 16) meant the same practice by German-Lutherans was brought to Australia. For over 100 years, the Lutheran church in Australia was divided amongst two synods over tension and disagreements on theological issues (Ruwoldt, 2006; Schild, 1999; Whitehead, 2001; Zweck, 2013). Eventually they combined as one synod in 1966. In 2022,

the Lutheran church has claim to be "the main Protestant church in the world" (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2022c).

2.6   The Australian Lutheran school story

Lutheran congregational schools existed to instruct the children of the Lutheran church to read so that they could understand the Bible. This provided opportunity for the faith of children to be nurtured according to Lutheran beliefs, in the hope it would provide future church workers for the security of the Lutheran church and its schools (Hauser, 2009; Jennings, 2009; Leske, 1996; Zweck, 1971). Being a teacher in a Lutheran school was held in high regard, as it was one step from becoming a Lutheran pastor (Hauser, 2009). If the school did not have a teacher, the Lutheran church pastor provided instruction. As in Germany, children were educated through the German language in Australian Lutheran schools, where they learnt the Bible, Luther's catechism, hymns, reading, writing and arithmetic (Bartsch, 2001; Leske, 1996; Whitehead, 2001).

By 1870, there were 38 Lutheran schools in South Australia, located mostly in rural areas (LEA, 2020b). Their source of financial and resource support came from the village's Lutheran church families because government funding was not available. While statistics on religious affiliation were not gathered at the time, it was likely that all school children were from Lutheran families (Bartsch, 2001, 2013). The Lutheran school traditions, practices, history and culture were founded on those of the Lutheran church.

Each Lutheran school's context is shaped according to its location, socio-economic status, leadership group, size, age, Lutheran church relationship and community needs. However, the LCA beliefs, ethos and values underpin the operations of Lutheran schools as schools of the LCA (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2001, 2016; Lutheran Education Australia, 2013,

2016). This is a key consideration for the research school. As a Lutheran school, it has foundational and theological beliefs, practices and traditions with historical and theological connections to the LCA (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2001; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).

From 1839

As explained earlier, Lutheran schools in Australia grew from humble beginnings and struggled for many years. During the World War I years of 1914 to 1918, the British Empire, which included Australia, fought against Germany. Lutheran schools were controlled by German-Lutherans and therefore found themselves under suspicion of having connections to the German 'enemy'. Lutheran schools were forced to close in South Australia due to government restrictions requiring the closure of all Lutheran primary schools (Koepping, 2007; Zweck, 2013). In other states of Australia they closed because their "use of the German language and their German background connected them to a national enemy" (Hauser, 2011, p. 14). Due to these regulations and the suspicions of German migrants, changes were forced. Teaching in German was banned, which meant their German Bibles, hymn books and catechisms could not be used and many German village and town names were renamed to 'acceptable' English names (Hauser, 2011; Koepping, 2007; Zweck, 2013).

Post World War I

By 1919 only a handful of Lutheran schools remained open, with low student numbers. The Great Depression and World War II years followed, bringing further tough economic times, unemployment and continued anti-German feelings towards Lutheran churches and schools (Bartsch, 2001; Personal communication, September 2022; Zweck, 2013). Several Lutheran congregational schools gradually opened with the pastor as the teacher. As

teachers completed their theological training at the Lutheran institution for pastors and teachers, they were able to take up teaching roles in Lutheran schools.

The Australian Federal and State governments had formed the education system based on their experiences in England prior to World War I, where "education was not a high priority" (Hauser, 2009, p. 19). Secular secondary education developed very slowly due to the dominance by private providers in the secondary sector (Caldwell, 2010; Hauser, 2009). In contrast, the German-Lutherans from Europe were used to compulsory schooling for five to thirteen-year-olds being run by the church, which became their expectation in Australia (Hauser, 2009). Lutheran schools had developed a strong reputation for providing a universal education through the compulsory primary years and the secondary years. This was due to the influence of Martin Luther, who provided opportunities for students to attend higher education. At the time, private schools were the main provider of secondary education. These schools were pathways to universities and accessed by the more privileged in society (Hauser, 2011; Jennings, 2009; Marks, 2000).

The South Australian government gradually increased their focus and support of education by increasing the school leaving age and abolishing secondary school fees. This caused State schools to grow and increase in number. Education was:

> fuelled by population growth, an increase in white collar jobs, rising societal expectations, migrant aspirations, demand from employers, as well as influences from overseas. (Hauser, 2011, p. 23)

Post World War II

By the 1960s, secondary education had become 'normalised'. There were fewer one teacher schools and State governments in Australia worked to increase student numbers in schools. However, this was at the expense of educational standards:

> a new system of advancement through the years of schooling based on numbers rather than standards … led to more participation in schooling … at the expense of the standard of education they achieved. (Hauser, 2011, p. 23)

Lutheran schools continued to increase in number. By 1965, more primary and several secondary boarding schools had commenced across Australia, and Independent schools continued to grow because of continued demand for faith-based education (Bartsch, 2001; Everett, 2017; Hauser, 2011).

From 1966

1966 was a significant turning point with State and Federal government funding support made available to Independent schools, which generated demand and growth for Independent schools in Australia (Bartsch, 2001; Engelhardt, 2012; Hauser, 2016; Jennings, 2009). As teachers were in short supply, government funding was provided to teachers' colleges to meet demand. The Independent school system offered a secondary education for students as a pathway to tertiary studies. Hauser (2011) explained that Independent schools were:

> the major provider of secondary schooling, ushering more privileged students through the gates of the universities … Secondary schools focused on an academic curriculum which prepared students for university studies. (p. 23)

From 1966 to 1999 there were significant educational changes in different Australian states that affected curriculum, assessment and secondary leaver certification.

Significant growth years

The greatest expansion of Lutheran schools across Australia was from the late 1970s to 1990s. Lutheran schools grew in number and size and were established in new locations. This was especially evident in Queensland (Bartsch, 2001, 2013; LEA, 2014). During these years, Lutheran schools and colleges from kindergarten to Year 12 were established in areas of Australia where the Lutheran church was very small or non-existent. Often these

sites were in new residential estates where developers had set aside land earmarked for a school. Lutheran schools had a philosophy of providing complementary Christian teachings and secular knowledge, while nurturing students to be valued citizens and faithful Christians (Hauser, 2011; Jennings, 2011; Jericho, 2004).

An increased demand for secondary education enabled Lutheran secondary schools to be established in areas central to Lutheran primary schools, where students could complete their Lutheran education locally without the need to attend boarding school. Queensland recorded the most significant growth in Lutheran schooling, with economic opportunities resulting from State housing developments and the expansion of residential and tourism coastal zones. Increased enrolments came from affluent families with professional and business interests, and from those who valued the opportunities provided through academic and sporting interests (Bartsch, 2001, 2013; Hauser, 2011; Jennings, 2004).

Some Lutheran schools were established as birth to Year 12 education providers where care and support for families including access to aged care facilities, was possible. It followed that a strong, connected community atmosphere developed as people interacted and attended community events.

From 1999 to the present

Lutheran schools served families from a wide variety of backgrounds. They were scattered across the country (Hauser, 2011) and could be found in all Australian states and territories except the Australian Capital Territory (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022d). Lutheran schools consisted of early childhood services, primary schools, secondary schools and colleges and combined early years to Year 12 colleges. In addition, LEA as the national

Lutheran education organisation, was formed and now operates on behalf of the LCA in partnership with LEQ, LESNW and LEVNT across Australia.

Lutheran schools are agencies of the LCA where mission and ministry occur. The LCA developed policies and guidelines for Lutheran schools informed by Lutheran theology which underpin and influence school operations and practices through beliefs, values and structures as experienced by people.

School staffing

The responsibility for ownership and the operation of Lutheran schools rests with the LCA through its congregations and church districts (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2001). Historically, data on staff religious affiliation was not gathered from 1839 to 1870. However, it is likely that staff in early Lutheran schools were mostly Lutheran because teachers were required to complete specific Lutheran theological study at a Lutheran seminary so they could teach in Lutheran schools (Albinger, 2010; Wegener, 2006; Zweck, 1988).

As explained previously, the number and size of Lutheran schools increased through the significant growth years, which generated a need for more staff. As teacher supply was short and Lutheran schools had choice and autonomy over their staff, they could employ the most suitable teachers in the system to meet the demand, which included other Christian and non-Christian staff. In recent years, data on the religious affiliation of school staff has been collected. Figure 2 shows the change in religious affiliation of staff employed in Lutheran schools from 1983 to 2019 in response to Lutheran school growth (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022c).
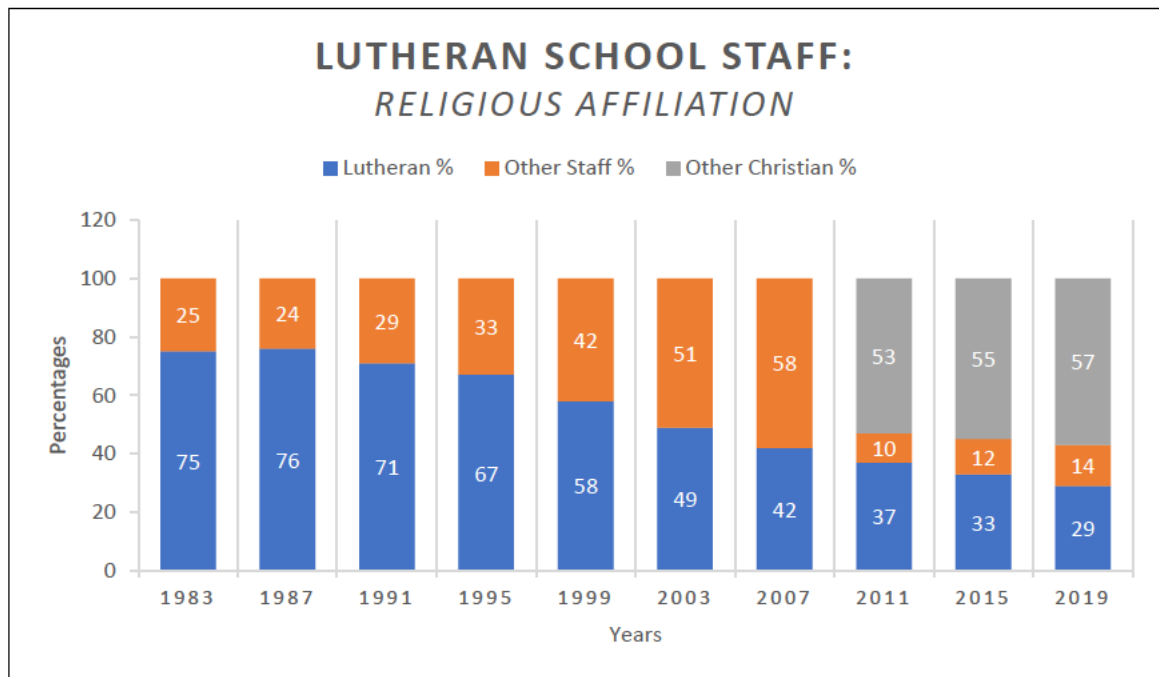
Figure 2 - Staff religious affiliation (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022c)

As more non-Lutheran teachers were employed, there was a risk of Lutheran practices and traditions diminishing over time. At the same time, greater staff diversity brought greater breadth and different worldviews and perspectives on society. So that Lutheran church practices and traditions were maintained, the church required Lutheran school staff to be accredited with further Lutheran theological training, referred to as 'accreditation'.

Staff accreditation

Due to the diverse nature of staff religious backgrounds, Lutheran church theological accreditation programs were developed to support new staff so that:

> the Church can be assured that its teachings are known to and understood by those who work as educators in Lutheran Schools, and that those who lead the School or teach Christian Studies have an adequate grounding in Lutheran theology. (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2013, p. 2)

The formational programs for teachers and leaders in Lutheran schools required for church accreditation are called *Connect* and *Equip* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2020a). They are completed during employment and designed to meet teachers' spiritual needs in Lutheran education. The programs provide experiences for new staff to explore the 'what, why and

how' of Lutheran education in Christian love (Bartsch, 2013; Jacqueline, 2011; Jarick, 2022)

as Luther would have endorsed. The programs allow teachers to:

> explore Lutheran education, its beliefs and spiritual life. It helps you inquire into 'why
> we do what we do' … it supports you to serve and reflect on your role and contribution
> to the mission of your school or ECS (Early Childhood Service). (Lutheran Education
> Australia, 2020c)

Connect and *Equip* are intended to be carried out with staff respectfully and inclusively in

a gentle, caring way that is designed to engage people's heads, hearts and hands. Through

these formation programs, new staff experience a small part of Lutheran education,

connect with others, and learn some of the Lutheran theological beliefs and practices

central to Lutheran school culture (Lutheran Education Australia, 2020c), which this thesis

explores.

Students

Lutheran school student enrolments increased from 3,160 to 41,259 students between

1966 and 2020 (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022d) as shown in Figure 3.

> They grew in size and number and broadened their purposes and spread to new
> regions … government funding fuelled a Lutheran school boom … building new
> facilities, forging partnerships with inexperienced congregations and adjusting to
> larger schools … because of popular demand … The boom was born out of a grass roots
> demand for Lutheran schooling fuelled by substantial government capital and
> recurrent funding to the independent sector. (Hauser, 2011, pp. 191-197)

Lutheran schools were originally intended to be nurturing environments for Lutheran

children of the church, which expanded over the years to include other Christian and non-

Christian students. The enrolment increases shown in Figure 3 provided increased mission

or outreach opportunities in partnership with the church.
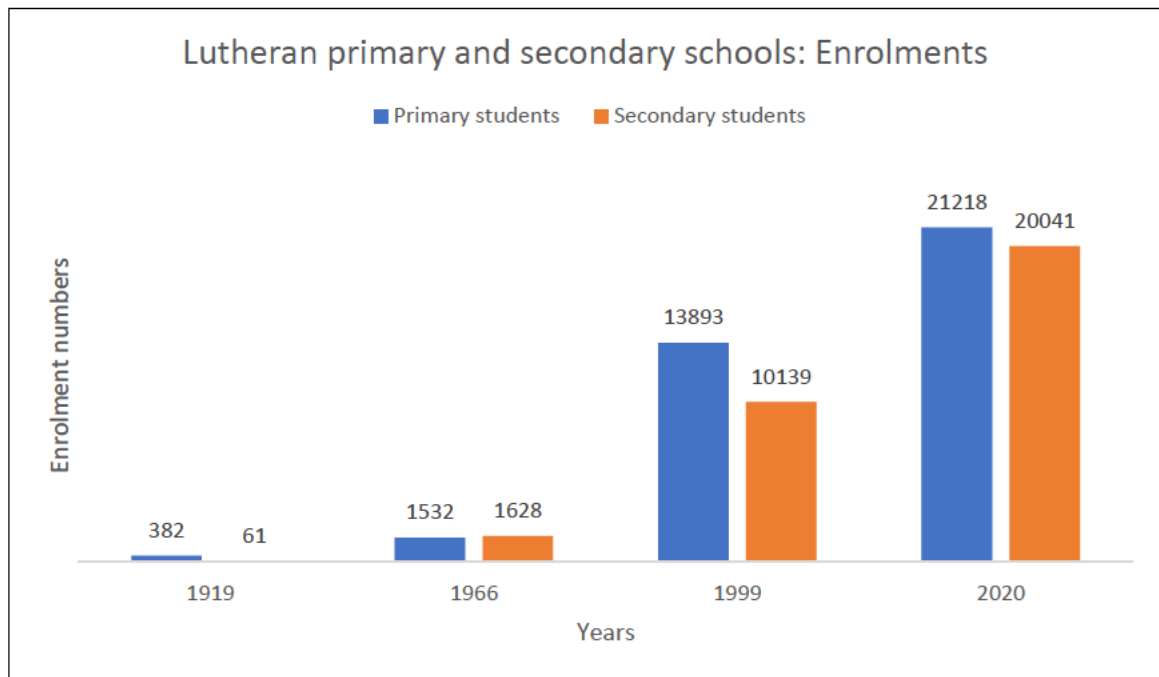
Figure 3 – Lutheran schools enrolments (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022d)

Data from 1983 to 2019 (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022b) shows a significant decrease in the percentage of Lutheran students enrolling in Lutheran schools (Figure 4). This decline was matched with a large increase in students who were affiliated with other Christian denominations or with no affiliated religion. As explored by Jennings (2007, 2009), the Christian faith of students was nurtured for many students in Lutheran schools. Over time and as non-Christian students attended Lutheran schools, there was a stronger emphasis on outreach to those with no or little Christian faith or belief in God.

By 1999, Queensland held the largest Lutheran student enrolments in Australia, which still applies today. Students from various religious and non-religious backgrounds attended local Lutheran schools. This bolstered enrolment numbers and increased government funding and the provision of services and facilities, as determined by census data.
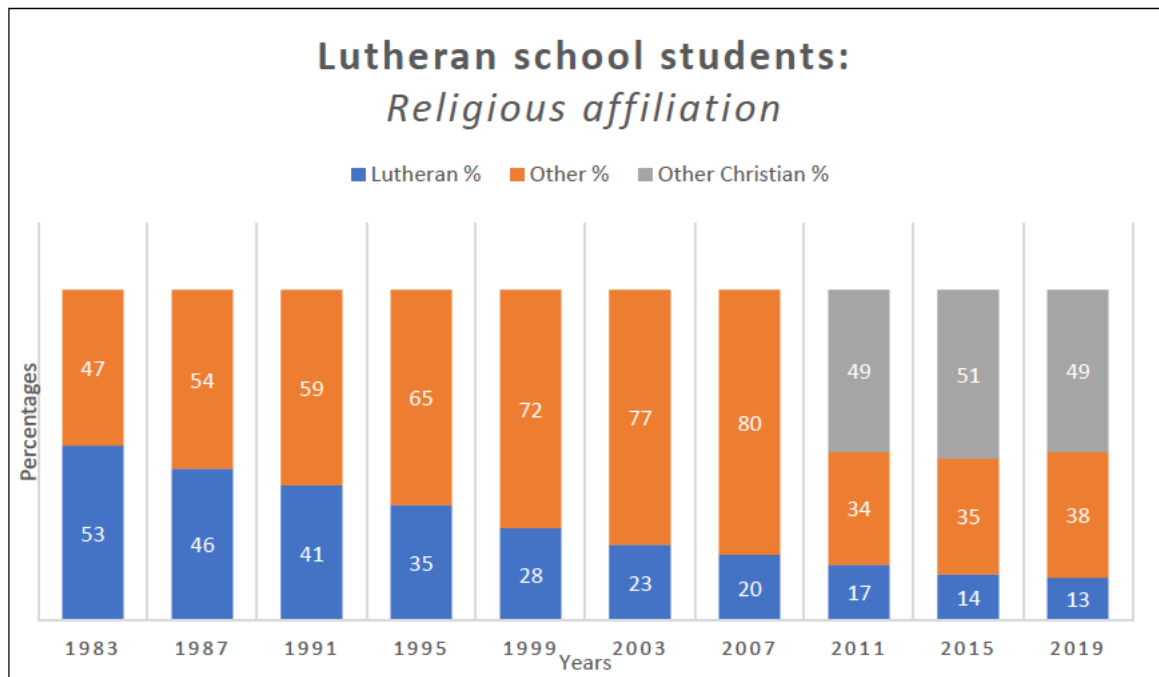
Figure 4 - Religious affiliation of students (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022b)

Initially the focus for Lutheran schools was on ministry, where the faith of Lutheran children from the local Lutheran church was fostered. As more schools opened and enrolments grew, students from Christian and non-Christian backgrounds attended Lutheran schools. While ministry, or nurture continued there was also a focus on mission, or outreach. Mission involves introducing students and their families with little or no Christian faith to God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the hope they will become believers. Lutheran schools strive to be intentional in their Christian outreach, to serve the local community, be witnesses of the Christian faith and provide a quality Christian education (Bartsch, 2001; Butler & Butler, 2017; Jennings, 2007; Jewson & Thambi, 2020).

2.7 Lutheran theology

The research was conducted in a Lutheran school which has a traditional association with the Lutheran church. Therefore, key Lutheran theological teachings of the church that apply to Lutheran schools are included here. They explain the beliefs, values, theological

foundations and practices in Lutheran schools, which inform the LEA guiding documents discussed in Chapter Three.

Theology is the study of the Bible as God's story, so that more can be learnt about God. Lutheran theological perspectives originated from the work of Martin Luther during the 16th Century Reformation period in Europe. As per the Lutheran Church of Australia (2022a) website, Luther's teachings and beliefs were recorded in the Augsburg Confession which "has become the charter of Lutheran churches all around the world" (Martin Luther and the Reformation section, para. 5). For over three hundred years, Luther's messages and scriptural interpretations have been taught and shared with people across the world, including Australia from 1838. These are recorded in *The Book of Concord* (Tappert, 1959).

God created and creates

Lutherans believe that God created the universe and all that exists, and that he continues to create daily to preserve the world. Human beings have been created to be in relationship with God and with each other. They are charged by God to be caretakers of his created world by living on this earth and preserving and caring for it as stewards. Through these actions, God uses people in their vocations to carry out his work for his purposes. God utilises human gifts and talents through their hands and feet, so that others can be served and to help in caring for creation (Bartsch, 2013; Lutheran Education Australia, 2015; Tappert, 1959).

Lutheran schools share in these beliefs about creation through the informal curriculum and actions within the school that shape people. People in school communities are provided with opportunities to learn about God, use their God-given gifts and talents, serve and assist others and care for God's creation. It is hoped that through these activities and

experiences, people connect with others at the school, local, national and global levels, and strive to make a difference in the lives of others so that the world becomes a better place for all.

The word of God

According to the Lutheran Church of Australia (2020), Lutherans believe "that only the Bible is the source of inspiration and teaching" (Our Beliefs and Teachings, para. 1). Bartsch (2013) explains that the Bible is the "ultimate authority for the church in determining doctrine and is the basis for the proclaimed word" (p. 40). For Lutherans, God's Word takes three forms. One is in the written form of the Bible. Another is the living form of God's Word that existed through Jesus Christ as God's Son who became human on earth. The third form of God's Word is spoken through preaching, teaching and in discussions with people as they experience confession, forgiveness of sins and the sacraments in their lives as Christians (Bartsch, 2013; Lutheran Church of Australia, 2020; Tappert, 1959).

As Lutheran schools follow the beliefs and traditions of the Lutheran church, the Bible is upheld as the central authority of God's Word. Through different practices, God's Word is spoken and heard through worship and devotion times, used as a resource for study and discussed in Christian Studies lessons. These experiences provide opportunities for God's Word to be heard by students and staff. God's Word also informs the Lutheran school's practices of worship, devotion and other practices and rituals. Lutheran theology underpins the beliefs, values and actions of staff, as it informs and shapes the culture of the school through mission and ministry. These practices and experiences are freely shared, taught and practiced with students, staff, families and others connected to the school community – no matter who they are or their belief systems (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2016; Lutheran Education Australia, 2016).

The two kingdoms

The two kingdoms or hands provides a description for the way God operates in the world. Lutheran schools operate in two kingdoms, referred to as the left and right-hand kingdoms. The kingdom of the left means the earthly life where all people live and work. They live with laws, order and government that provides safety and structure in the world.

The kingdom of the right refers to the heavenly realm or the work of the church as the people of God. God operates through his Word being read, heard, preached and through the sacraments of baptism and holy communion offered to God's people. In the kingdom of the right, the church's work is not to interfere with government or authority (Albinger, 2005; Bartsch, 2013; Tappert, 1959).

Lutheran schools operate in the kingdom of the left because they are educational institutions that serve the State. Bartsch (2001) explains that schools have safety, curriculum and legislative requirements and standards to meet. Educationally and financially, they are accountable to government organisations as they prepare students for life beyond school.

As agencies of the church, Lutheran schools have responsibilities that include proclaiming God's Word, providing worship and devotional times and teaching about God and the Bible through Lutheran school experiences. Through these practices, the faith of Christians in the school is nurtured in ministry. As non-Christians participate in rituals and practices, they encounter Christian experiences in mission, service and outreach (Jennings, 2011). Through the activities of the left and right kingdoms, the Lutheran church teaches that God operates and works inconspicuously through people by using their gifts and talents to service a

greater good or need in the school community and ultimately in society (Androne, 2020; Bartsch, 2013, 2015; Lutheran Education Australia, 2016; Veith, 2011).

The informal curriculum influences people through the two kingdoms. While the kingdoms operate simultaneously and have different purposes, they serve each other but are not to interfere with each other. Christians are citizens of both kingdoms and therefore have responsibility in both kingdoms. Lutheran schools provide education in the kingdom of the left for all students, whilst developing the faith of Christians and serving non-Christians in mission in the kingdom of the right (Bartsch, 2001).

Grace alone – faith alone – Christ alone

Luther identified a central Bible passage from the book of Ephesians that distinguishes the Lutheran belief. The Lutheran church website provides a summary of this belief:

> we believe that we are saved 'by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith'. In other words, there is nothing we can do to earn God's favour or to gain eternal life. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has won all this and more for us. (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2020)

This key teaching is central to Lutheran theology and means that Lutheran schools are often referred to as 'grace places' and 'communities of hope'. Through the action of the informal curriculum, people may experience care, love, compassion and support from others because of their association with a Lutheran school.

Related to this theological concept is the understanding of law and gospel that explains how God works in the world. Bartsch (2013) explains the law is used in three ways. Firstly, it is like a book of instructions for all people where God intends for the world to be kept in order and preserved. Secondly, it is like a mirror that exposes the sins or wrongs of all humans. Thirdly, it is like a signpost that guides Christians in living. However, the gospel – or good news for Christians, is central, at the heart of God's Word, and frees Christians

from sin and death through forgiveness and the restoration of relationships with God. Therefore, "people are freed from their sin and can live at peace with God, themselves, their fellow human beings and the whole of creation" (Bartsch, 2013, p. 99). This belief is preached, taught and advocated for in Lutheran schools through the practices of worship, devotion and other experiences, enabling students and staff to encounter God's work in the world of the school.

2.8   Summary of the research context

This chapter has set the scene for the Lutheran school context in Australia. It places Lutheran schools within the Independent schools sector, considers the history of the Lutheran church in Germany and later in Australia, and explains key Lutheran theological beliefs that underpin Lutheran school practices and experiences. This chapter shared some of the Lutheran church and school experiences in Australia and their challenging histories before, during and after the war years. Following these times and with the support of government funding, Lutheran school, staff and student numbers have significantly increased.

The next chapter reviews the literature on culture, curriculum and key LCA and LEA resources and documents for Lutheran schools.

3   Reviewing the literature

3.1   Introduction to the literature reviewed

The literature review begins by considering cultural perspectives that include a site ontological view and the theory of practice architectures, before considering practices as they relate to socialisation and their influence on culture. This leads to a review of the literature on organisational and school culture, including practices shaped by rituals, traditions and history.

In reviewing the literature on curriculum, the formal, informal, hidden and null curricula are considered, including a focus on the significance of traditions and practices in the context of these curricula.

Lutheran theological concepts related to Lutheran schools were outlined in the previous chapter. These concepts surface through the school's practice architectures, its traditions and practices, and the beliefs and values of Lutheran schools. While informing related Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA) and Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) school documents, frameworks and policies shared in this chapter, they are considered in relation to a site ontological approach and the theory of practice architectures.

3.2   Cultural perspectives

In Chapter One, school culture was explained as encompassing climate and atmosphere, affected by the environment, and defined by ethos according to the school's history and traditions (Deal & Peterson, 2016b; Ervin, 2019). The social interactions and experiences of people in the school influence the cultural perceptions they develop. Sackmann (2016)

viewed culture as a web of actions, relatings and communications amongst and between people in a space, emphasising the influence of cultural practices. Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018) recognised that people learn practices, or patterns and behaviours by socialising and relating with others through life. A significant distinction by Schatzki (2005) was that organisations have a social life which "is inherently tied to a kind of context in which it transpires" (p. 467). While this is elaborated upon in the following section, it means the school exhibits particular social practices that are related and interconnected to its context. These practices as experienced by students, staff and parents, are of interest in this research.

A site ontological perspective of culture

A site ontological view of culture looks at social life, or how organisations are and operate. 'Site' refers to the type of context, arena or set of phenomena surrounding a practice, which influences the conditions of the unfolding practice (Schatzki, 2005; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). According to Schatzki (2006), "an organization, like any social phenomena, is a bundle of practices and material arrangements" (p. 1863). Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) explain:

> A site ontological perspective attempts to steer between individualist accounts of social life—in which social phenomena are viewed as constructions of individuals and/or their relations, and dominant societist accounts — which argue that not all social phenomena are individual constructions and foreground phenomena outside individuals, such as discourses or social systems (Schatzki, 2005). (p. 343)

Using a site ontological perspective or lens, the focus is on the organisation's practices and activities that happen and make up its social life (Schatzki, 2005, 2006). Practices are organised human activities or sets of actions that consist of sayings and doings that 'hang together' for a purpose or within a project, where the 'project' refers to the desired outcome or purpose of a practice (Kemmis, 2009, 2019). The activities that make up

practices are tied with material arrangements, such as walkways, physical objects and structures, and the layouts of offices, workrooms and leisure areas (Schatzki, 2005). In extending the notion of site ontology to schools, Schatzki (2005) explains practices are interwoven and interdependent:

> the coexistence among teachers and students is not practices, on the one hand, and material arrangements on the other, but a mesh of practices and arrangements. (p. 473)

The diverse practices in schools mostly involve staff and students, and include planning, marking, reporting, eating lunch, playing during breaks, assemblies and engaging in other school events and activities. Examples of material arrangements include the layouts of classrooms, playground equipment and spaces, whole school meeting areas, the sports field, and the equipment and layouts of the front office and staff room (Kemmis et al., 2014; Schatzki, 2005, 2022). The practices and activities of staff and students that include associated sayings and doings, together with material arrangements, contribute to the social life of the school (Nicolini, 2013; Wilkinson, 2021). In my research and through the research participants, the bundled practices, activities and material arrangements of the school illuminate perspectives on its cultural artefacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions, which contribute to the findings of this research.

The theory of practice architectures

Schatzki's (2005) site ontological approach discussed above refers to the sayings and doings of practices as being interconnected with the school's practices and material arrangements. The theory of practice architectures (TPA) (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015), inspired by Schatzki's (2005) site ontological approach to practice theory and used to help interpret social life, is now explained.

The TPA considers the practices of the individual and their relationship to the arrangements that exist in a context or site. Practices as they happen by the individual exhibit interrelated "sayings, doings and relatings" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 13) that are made possible by each other. Wilkinson (2021) describes practices as being composed of 'sayings' or "ideas, understandings and thinkings", 'doings' or "actions, skills and capabilities", and 'relatings' or "values, emotions and norms" (p. 36). 'Relatings' as an addition to the work of Schatzki, recognise that practices always involve relationships with and between humans or objects (Kemmis, 2012; Mahon et al., 2017; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). As explained by Kemmis (2022b):

> The most important purpose of the theory of practice architectures is that it impels users to explore everyday life and practices in order to discover what arrangements enable and constrain how this or that particular practice unfolds. (p. 87)

The practices of individuals are held in place by pre-existent practice architectures, arrangements or social patterns that are unseen, yet detectable in the context or site (Kemmis et al., 2014; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). These practice architectures are "cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 6), and regulate the practices of individuals by enabling and/or constraining them. Cultural-discursive arrangements regulate the language and meaning of practices through what is communicated in practices. Material-economic arrangements refer to the resources and physical spaces that regulate the context and action of practices. Socio-political arrangements include the relationships and power that regulate relations between people (Grootenboer, 2018; Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Thorkelsdóttir, 2022; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).

The dimensions or space between the practice of the practitioner and the practice architectures or arrangements of the context or site is referred to as 'intersubjective space'. This is where exchanges, encounters, communication and socialisation happen (Kemmis et

al., 2013, 2014; Grootenboer, 2018) and is of interest in this research. One dimension of this intersubjective space is semantic space, where language and meaning are used in the thoughts and talk of people. A second dimension is physical space and time through the activities and work of people. The third dimension of intersubjective space is social, where relationships are developed between people and their world (Kemmis, 2022c; Mahon et al., 2017; Niemi & Loukomies, 2020; Thorkelsdóttir, 2022; Wilkinson, 2021).

As these networks of practices and practice architectures interact, blend and become tangled together in intersubjective space, the practices can continue or even evolve and emerge as different practices that are interdependent of each other. Referred to as an "ecology of practices" (Kemmis, 2022a, p. 124), there may be a noticeable distinctiveness amongst the practices and practice architectures that encompass characteristic ways of talking and thinking, doing and connecting with others (Kemmis, 2022a; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016).

In later sections of this thesis, I suggest that this Lutheran school has an ecology of practices as explained by Kemmis (2022a) through the TPA. The school has various pre-existing arrangements and spaces where practices use a particular language with meaning, include specific activities and work, and hold relationships of power and solidarity amongst its community. My research elicits the cultural perspectives of students from seven to twelve years of age through photo elicitation interviews (PEI) in relation to the cultural practices of the school, with the findings from this research discussed in Chapters Six and Seven.

As socialisation happens in the intersubjective space between the practice and practice architectures and is of interest in this research, it is now considered.

The significance of socialisation

According to Maccoby (2014), socialisation is a process through which:

> naïve individuals are taught the skills, behaviour patterns, values, and motivations needed for competent functioning in the culture in which the child is growing up … Socialization processes include all those whereby culture is transmitted from each generation to the next. (p. 3)

While this explanation of socialisation refers to the child, 'naïve individuals' includes other persons as they develop the social skills and understandings, and a level of social readiness to interact with others and fit into groups. Through socialisation, individuals learn and acquire the cultural values, norms and behaviours of a group or society. According to the TPA, interactions happen in intersubjective space between the practices of the practitioner and the practice architectures of the school's context, arena or site (Grootenboer, 2018; Kemmis, 2019, 2022b; Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018). This is where practices are "embroiled in language, activities, and forms of relating" (Grootenboer, 2018, p.47) through socialisation or encounters with people. People are initiated or "'stirred into' practices" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 93) as part of their learning by becoming familiar with the practice architectures of activities, events and routines in the school.

Charon (2011) acknowledges that humans are social and cultural beings who need each other to survive. Individuals have their own cultures, with cultural traits and practices learnt from family traditions, modelled behaviours, learning experiences and life encounters. Socialisation occurs primarily through family members. Eaude (2019) explains that the actions, interactions and 'who adults are' as role models socially influences young people in the home. Berger and Luckmann (1967) recognise that for young people, socialisation is also influential in secondary environments that include schools, local community sporting and religious groups, and through extended family members. According to Charon (2011):

> Our talents, tastes, interests, values, personality traits, ideas, and morals are not qualities we have at birth but qualities we develop through socialization in the context of the family, the school, our peers, the community, and even the media. (p. 2)

Socialisation continually shapes each person's ways of being and living, through the social practices or habits, actions, language and mannerisms they bring to a space, site or a group. These practices are "everyday interactions between people" (Kemmis, 2014, p. 53) and are of interest in this research.

Socialisation and related practices

Socialisation helps newcomers learn and understand a group or organisation's culture and to receive acceptance into a cultural group (Guimond, 2000; Schein, 2010). In a process of socialisation, people interact and learn the cultural norms and behaviours of a group or society.

Socialisation was influential for people and their communities in the early years of Lutheran schooling. Jennings (2011) shared that schools "emphasised enculturation into church and community [as the] schools rested on a firm theological foundation" (p. 103). Rituals, signs and symbols, events and activities of the early Lutheran schools were founded on those of the Lutheran church, and became the medium for students and families to be socialised into the beliefs, values and practices of the school (Albinger, 2010; Eisenmenger, 1990; Hauser, 2003; Jennings, 2011; Rossiter, 2010). These habit-forming practices shaped through socialisation were referred to by Bourdieu (2005) as 'habitus'. In this research, socialisation continues to influence people associated with Lutheran schools through the school's practices, traditions, beliefs, values and the existing school practice architectures (Kemmis, 2022b; Niemi & Loukomies, 2020), which have "their own distinctive discourses, forms of activity and work, and social–political arrangements" (Kemmis, 2012, p. 901).

Practices are regular, daily actions that have purpose and consist of smaller interconnected activities (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). The practices and activities that happen in the school are significant because of a 'suffusion-like' process that occurs. Hui et al. (2017) explain the term:

> 'suffusing' – which means to spread over or through as with a liquid or gas – suggests that certain phenomena can pervade practices and complexes, providing a kind of atmosphere in which actions are performed and practices carried forward. (p. 4)

Understanding the cultural phenomena that pervade the practices in this school from the perspectives of students, staff and parents is significant for this research. It will give meaning to the various artefacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions of the case study school's cultural perspectives, which are explained later in this Chapter.

The influences of culture

Schein (2010) argues that culture shapes people and their behaviours, which in turn shapes culture. According to Holliday (2016) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016), culture is a social tool-kit that guides people's behaviours and understandings through their habitual engagements. Unwritten beliefs, values and attitudes are embedded within the practice architectures or arrangements of an organisation. They influence the behaviours, words and actions of people and groups entering the practices of the organisation through their interactions and connections in the intersubjective space (Kemmis et al., 2014; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016). These patterns of behaviour, produced and exchanged between people, hold meaning (Hall, 1997; Schein, 2010). While these patterns can be explicit or implicit, they consciously or unconsciously exist through visual means, sounds, words or actions (Rose, 2016). As shared meanings are exchanged through the verbal and visual language of culture, people communicate, develop and deepen understandings, and share and exchange meaning (Schein, 2010). Hall (2013) suggests that the language used in

different cultures is significant because it represents shared meanings which ultimately provide individuals and groups with their sense of identity. According to Wheatley (2007), cultures have patterns of behaviour that include rituals, signs, symbols, language and practices which help people make sense of events and happenings (Kwantes & Glazer, 2017). From the perspective of the TPA, as people converse and socialise in intersubjective space, they are "initiated into forms of understanding in the shared medium of *language*, in *semantic space*" (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018, p. 17) (authors' italics), shaped according to the existing cultural-discursive arrangements of the organisation and the sayings of the individual practitioner or practice.

As organisational culture and school culture are both significant to this research, they are now considered.

3.3   Organisational and school culture

An understanding of organisational culture

Literature by Edgar Schein (2010) explains that organisational culture is constructed of artefacts, beliefs and values, and underlying assumptions at varying levels, depths and layers, which has been likened to an 'onion' model (Cunniffe, 2021; Kwantes & Glazer, 2017). When considering the onion model with the TPA, the material-economic arrangements as they relate to the 'doings' of practices could be compared to the outer layer of the onion because of their observable characteristics. The 'sayings' or cultural-discursive arrangements and 'relatings' or social-political arrangements would make up the inner rings. As highlighted by Schein and Schein (2017) and endorsed by Kwantes and Glazer (2017), the influence of an organisation's founders and leaders in establishing the

core values, beliefs, mission and practices of an organisation has endured considerably over time.

A closer look at the work of Schein

Early literature from Schein (1984) proposed organisational culture as a new concept. Recognising that culture was more than "a set of shared meanings" (p. 3), Schein saw a need to understand the influential forces on culture. While these forces produced a "pattern of basic assumptions" (p. 3) that surfaced through visible artefacts, simple explanations for cultural patterns and how they unfolded were often hidden. People in a workplace had a vague sense of something guiding their behaviour and decision making. Schein however, recognised that organisational assumptions were taken for granted by individuals and embedded in organisations.

Schein (2010) proposed the model of organisational culture as a central element of his work. While initially this model gave society a common language for the description of organisational culture, it became more widely understood. Over time and as explained by Schein & Schein (2017), knowledge and understandings of culture evolved and adjusted to incorporate broader and deeper perspectives that were uncovered through research and experience. As organisational culture was viewed at macro and micro levels, strategic cultural knowledge helped in understanding an organisation's performance.

The model identifies three levels or 'onion-like layers' of culture to help understand an organisation's culture. Tangible artefacts are represented by the outer layer of organisational culture, which includes visible structures, processes and observable behaviours. The "espoused beliefs and values" (p. 24) are represented by the middle layers through the organisation's goals, values, aspirations and ideologies. At the core or deepest

level, are the underlying assumptions which are the "unconscious, taken-for-granted beliefs and values" (p. 24) of the organisation that influence employees' behaviours, thoughts and feelings.

> To understand a group's culture, you must attempt to get at its shared basic assumptions and understand the learning process by which such basic assumptions evolve. (Schein, 2010, p. 32)

It is for this reason that Schein's three levels of cultural analysis are central in the conceptual framework for this research. The significance of these cultural elements is expanded upon in the following section on school culture.

Perspectives on school culture

Culture is related to the organic and connected web of practices, relationships and people present in a community. In this research, and as discussed in Chapter One, school culture is defined as the norms, rituals, values and beliefs, signs and symbols that are evident in the school environment (Collie, 2017; Deal & Peterson, 2016b; Donnelly, 2000; Ryan, 2010). While the school's practices, actions and activities are shaped by its history and traditions in a suffusive-like process (Hui et al., 2017), they are also influenced by and influence the people in the school environment.

Each school exhibits a distinctive or unique culture that is deep, intangible and influential (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Prosser, 1999; Stolp & Smith, 1995; Wren, 1999). As this deep culture infiltrates and is shaped by history and traditions, Harris (2018) noted that a school's structures and social practices shape and are shaped by its community members, who come with their own values and belief systems.

Within organisations and schools, sub-cultures develop amongst smaller groups of people (Marks, 2000; Prosser, 2007). Where the values and beliefs of sub-cultures match the

organisation's culture, they complement and strengthen the overall culture of a school. Conversely, conflicts can occur where issues and tensions compete with the desired school culture (Deal & Peterson, 2016b; Glover & Coleman, 2005; Solvason, 2005).

Wagner (2006) acknowledged the significance of the relational nature of school culture that provides a sense of belonging through its "sense of community, family and team membership" (p. 41), which is relevant to the current research. Through a sense of belonging and acceptance, school culture works to shape the thoughts, actions, beliefs, values, relationships and feelings of people (Deal & Peterson, 1999; Henry, 1993; Zepeda et al., 2022). According to Henry (1993), while shared meanings are essential for people in schools, belonging to a group is also important. This was affirmed in research literature from Villa and Thousand (2005), who found that belonging was a primary need for students to enable learning conditions:

> Almost every theory of motivation (e.g., Glasser, 1986; Maslow, 1970; Van Bockern, Brendtro, & Brokenleg, 2000) stresses the fulfillment of a child's need to belong as critical, if not prerequisite, to a child's motivation to learn. (p. 43)

According to James and Patrick (2011):

> School culture is important, both conceptually and concretely, because it can influence student academic achievement, employee satisfaction and productivity, parent engagement and commitment, and the support of the larger community. (p. 21)

More recent material by Nozoe (2022) and Khoshaba (2022) highlight the positive impacts on school culture when student voices are heard. In addition, Willis et al. (2021) found a more positive culture when parents were welcomed in the school and engaged in their child's learning. This is significant because similar findings surfaced in this research.

A practice theory approach helps to interpret the practices that happen by explaining the social and cultural phenomenon of individuals and their social world (Mahon et al., 2017; Nicolini, 2013; Reckwitz, 2002; Schatzki, 2001). Practice theories provide varied perspectives and understandings of social life and interpret practices in different ways. For

example, Schatzki proposed a site ontological perspective that focused on the site as the organisation. A dilemma faced by Schatzki related to the memories and experiences of people that might include histories and rituals, which influence their perceptions and interpretations of these experiences moment by moment. Wilkinson (2021) explains:

> Organisations "as they happen" (Schatzki, 2006) are engaged in a constant dance between the reproduction of practices prefigured by material arrangements and temporalities, as well as providing space for creativity, innovation and change. (p. 42)

For my research, practice architectures are important in determining 'culture' as it happens. As a practice theory, the TPA:

> is an account of what practices are composed of, and how practices shape and are shaped by the arrangements with which they are enmeshed in a site of practice. (Mahon et al., 2017, p. 7)

Using a site ontological approach (Schatzki, 2005), I am able to consider what and how practices happen in time and place for people in the school. The school as a site "is composed of a nexus of practices and material arrangements" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 471), where practices are activities organised by humans, and material arrangements refer to how physical objects are set up.

Tradition, history and rituals

A school's mission, vision and purpose is often aligned to deep-seated historical and cultural traditions and events that use language reflective of the school's stories and history (Collie, 2017; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Solvason, 2005). According to Henry (1993), the school's history, purpose and culture are shared with the community through the telling and retelling of stories. These stories give meaning to key symbols, signs and artefacts that depict the history and practice architecture of a school .

Rituals in schools have purpose, and historical and traditional significance. According to Martin (2001), rituals are planned activities that happen in view of others. They have a clear

start and finish, often include actions and selected words or phrases and are repeated.

Henry (1993) explains that rituals are binding and meaningful in their use of signs, symbols

and actions that link to historical practices and traditions:

> tradition is reinvented through ritual … ritual serves to orient people towards a particular tradition … [with] roots in the past but is updated to serve current needs. (p. 27)

School rituals that are part of school practices and events are binding, have meaning and

are powerful connectors to traditions for students, staff and its community members.

Rituals, together with school traditions, history and the school founders, shape and

communicate the school's culture. This is now considered in the context of faith-based

schools.

Faith-based schools

Faith-based schools in Australia include all Independent schools that have an affiliation with

a religious group (Independent Schools Australia, 2020). While faith-based schools include

the Lutheran primary school in this research, much of the literature available on faith-based

schools often considers the Catholic context. In conducting research on Catholic schools in

2010, Convey (2012) found that its religious dimension gave a distinctiveness to these

schools:

> what makes a Catholic school distinctive is its religious dimension, which is found in the educational climate, the personal development of each student, the relationship established between culture and the Gospel, and the illumination of all knowledge with the light of faith. (p. 208)

Researchers identified that while religion set faith-based schools apart from other

Independent or government schools, parents were often looking for a school with a

reputable culture and community, good teachers, discipline, values and social justice or

service opportunities (Educare News, 2001; Green, 2018; Independent Schools Council of

Australia, 2008; Kelley & Evans, 2004; Tovey & Mitchell, 2013). A study conducted in

Australia by Gleeson and O'Neill (2018) reported that religion was rated a lower priority than anticipated, however the "priority afforded to the Catholic school as a 'caring community' and to the school as a 'safe and caring environment' is encouraging" (p. 66).

As discussed earlier, rituals and traditions have deep meaning that connect history with stories for people, including in faith-based schools, through the happenings of everyday practices. Heft (1997) researched the distinctive nature of Catholic school culture, and found the experiences encountered through rituals, traditions and practices were powerful. In a school, religious actions, such as worship and devotions may be experienced several times each week. For most students and staff over time, these actions become normal, familiar and accepted practices as part of belonging to the faith-based school. Heft (1997) commented there was a connection in the experiences of rituals and practices to the thoughts and minds of humans, implying that the people present in the school were shaped by them over time.

In the Lutheran school context, and as discussed in Chapter Two, traditions, practices and rituals were inherited and practiced from LCA traditions as they originated from German-Lutherans who migrated to Australia in 1838 (Bartsch, 2001, 2013; Eisenmenger, 1998; Hauser, 2009, 2011). Lutheran schools in Australia today continue to be schools of the Lutheran church. As members of the Lutheran church, Lutheran school founders set the values, beliefs and practices of the school according to church requirements. These continue to exist and give meaning today through the Lutheran school's rituals, rites, acts and practices, which are expectations of the LCA (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2001). For this reason, Lutheran church traditions and theology were foundational in the establishment and growth of the Lutheran school involved in this research. Additional and

related school practicalities are found in LEA's *Growing Deep* framework (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016) and discussed later in this chapter.

Organisational and school culture have been considered because their cultural layers and levels provide insight to perspectives on culture for this research. These perspectives, together with a site ontological view and the theory of practice architectures, are combined to provide alternative cultural perspectives of the school. This alternative view considers the practices which happen in the context of the school, the architectures that hold them in place and the associated and interconnected web of sayings, doings and relatings of these practices.

Limitations of the literature

The literature on culture as presented by Schein (2010) provides a traditional, adult-focused model of culture which assumes a dominant leader in an organisation. While this leader has responsibilities for leading, guiding and directing operations and decision-making at the top of a hierarchy, it is likened to a hero model of leadership (Mintzberg, 2006; Spoelstra, 2017).

By considering the TPA that incorporates the "sayings, doings and relatings of practices" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 2), with a site ontological lens which focuses on the "practices and material arrangements" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 471), the practices that happen in the school become the focus rather than the people in the school (Wilkinson, 2021).

Nearly all of the research and literature on school culture is from the adult's perspective in a school or higher education - as teacher, leader, lecturer, student-teacher or higher education student (Bowen et al., 2017; Bush, 2010; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Prosser, 1999; Zepeda et al., 2022). Bell and Kent (2010) noted that:

previous studies have tended to focus upon the views of teachers, producing a cultural perspective that reflects their attitudes and opinions to the exclusion of other perspectives. (p. 12)

There is limited literature about primary school-aged students in research when attempting to understand their school cultural experiences. This research explores the school's culture from the perspectives of students, with some staff and parent voices included. The data gathered from students provides opportunities for their ideas and reflections to speak into and be agents for school culture. Wilkinson (2021) writes "practices matter … they are the fundamental cornerstone of human sociality" (p. 5). The approach that practices matter includes how students are engaged, what they say and do, how they relate to others, and the significant physical aspects through the site.

While there is considerable literature and research on school culture, there is little available on the culture of faith-based schools, and especially Lutheran schools (Court, 2006; Marks, 2000). The literature that does exist however, is again predominantly related to secondary and higher education, with very little material on the primary or elementary school sector. For this reason I am using a site ontological approach to look at culture, which I feel enables the importance of student perspectives to be more centrally included.

3.4   The school curriculum

In looking at school culture, consideration of the school curriculum as the formal program taught to students in schools is of value. The curriculum consists of learning areas that include content, skills and understandings to be developed by students as they progress through their schooling. A site ontological approach focuses on the practices and material arrangements in place (Schatzki, 2005, 2006). Students learn as actions or teacher instructions with their related sayings and doings, happen together with arrangements of learning spaces, equipment and furniture. Using the TPA approach to the curriculum, the

practice architectures that hold the practices together can be considered. The practice architectures may be invisible, yet they are known by staff and students and shape the educational experiences at the school. Some of these include the unwritten rules or actions, the social patterns and arrangements, what can or can't be said, and power arrangements and relations that exist amongst people. Through a site ontological approach and using the TPA, the cultural perspectives and practices of the school can be examined and understood (Kemmis, 2022c; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016; Wilkinson, 2021).

Understanding the formal curriculum

The formal curriculum (Dearn, 2004; Edwards & Carmichael, 2012; Khan, 2014) is the academic program mandated by the respective country or state. It is also known as the explicit curriculum (Bardes, 2004; Inlay, 2016) or the official curriculum (Çubukçu, 2012; Jackson, 1968; Prosser, 1999). It includes prescribed subjects or programs of learning that teachers use in planning for their students (Hargreaves, 1982).

Lovat and Smith (2003) and Van den Akker (2007) identified that types of curricula exist in the school context. Formal curriculum documentation is used by teachers and leaders to develop the planned or intended curriculum. Through the practice of teaching, the planned curriculum becomes the enacted or taught curriculum (Lovat & Smith, 2003), which may be different from that which was planned. This causes learning gaps as teaching time is lost, or more lesson time is needed to help students understand concepts. Another type of curriculum is the experienced or learned curriculum, being what students actually experience and learn (Van den Akker, 2007).

Considering the informal curriculum

Elements not part of the formal curriculum, such as the values, attitudes, socialisation and the relationships with others, are part of the informal curriculum (Dutton & Sellheim, 2014; Inlay, 2016). Signs, symbols and promotional material that are visible on the school grounds and communicated through the school's vision, mission and values, are not formal curriculum but referred to as the informal curriculum. Students are exposed to the informal curriculum through encounters, observations and activities at school. Emotions, attitudes and responses to events and situations in students' daily interactions are learnt as they socialise with others. Students also learn expected practices and behaviours through the rituals and practices that exist in a school which come with practice architectures. Examples include silently lining up outside the classroom after an outside play break, or raising their hand when they have a comment or question to share. Some literature refers to the informal curriculum as the implicit curriculum (Çubukçu, 2012; Hooper, 2008; Inlay, 2016), possibly because of its embedded nature within the learning environment (Morton et al., 2019; Quinn & Barth, 2014).

It is more common for literature to refer to the 'hidden curriculum' instead of the informal curriculum (Bray et al., 2018; Dearn, 2004; Hargreaves, 1982; Massialas, 2001; Sikkink, 2004; Wren, 1999). While planning the curriculum is intentional, there are associated, unintentional elements that exist as the hidden curriculum. Therefore the hidden curriculum requires further discussion.

A closer look at the hidden curriculum

The term 'hidden curriculum' began to appear in the late 1960s by Jackson (1968), who pioneered the term and identified its presence in education. In addition, Rahman (2013) acknowledged that this term was adopted by Dreben (1968) and Vallance (1973).

The hidden curriculum is unplanned, incidental and unseen, much like the inner ring of an onion. It operates subconsciously in a school and influences staff. Students are positively or negatively influenced through the actions of the hidden curriculum by their teachers, other staff, peers, student and staff leaders and visitors to the school community. According to Yüksel (2005), Kohlberg asserted that "the hidden curriculum has an important place in a school environment, having a more profound affect on the students than the formal curriculum" (p. 329) because its influence and power is more significant than educators realise. According to Hargreaves (1982), the hidden curriculum "most effectively prepares the young for the world beyond school" (p. 2). The practices of the hidden curriculum assist in the development of students' life skills. They provide social experiences for students and model behaviours and conversations between people during learning, eating or play breaks.

According to Jackson (1968), socialisation was a significant influence on the students in the classroom. Student peers were key influencers in socialisation because they were physically present and interacting with others on the school site during learning in the classroom, at breaks and before and after school (Acar, 2012; Arnold, 2007; Jackson, 1968; Rahman, 2013). Rahman (2013) noted that the social environment of the student and teacher influenced students in positive and negative ways. Teachers, as well as school administrators, transmit cultural actions to the students through the hidden curriculum. Messages from adult values, beliefs and expectations in the school are passed onto

students, and have an impact on students and their learning through teachers' practices, actions and conversations. As teachers assert their values and beliefs through school interactions, personal biases and values become part of the taught but hidden curriculum. Lovat and Smith (2003) shared that curriculum:

> gives messages to learners about who has, has not and should have power, control, authority and access to resources. Any curriculum provides a representation of the social structuring of the society in which it is operating. (p. 34)

Yüksel (2005) wrote that Kohlberg's published writings on the hidden curriculum and moral education in schools noted that students were shaped by the school's environment, social relations and atmosphere. This work generated a wave of interest in the hidden curriculum and assisted in the development of the concept in education into the 1980s.

Since the late 1980s, literature on the hidden curriculum in schools has been less frequent. According to Dutton and Sellheim (2014), the hidden curriculum has been well explored in medicine, health and social work. In recent years, while literature on the hidden curriculum has appeared in higher education, it has not been as common in relation to schools.

Literature reveals a connection between the hidden curriculum and relationships of people. Relationships can exhibit powerful emotional connections through socialisation. According to Orón Semper and Blasco (2018) and Mayes (2013), the hidden curriculum is regularly associated with the emotions and relationships of people. In schools, relationships form and shape the individual characteristics of students as a by-product of socialisation through the hidden curriculum (Burke & Segall, 2015; Çubukçu, 2012; Lounsbury, 2014). In addition and through socialisation, the hidden curriculum shapes staff and other adults who engage in activities at the school.

The null curriculum

A powerful component of the hidden curriculum is the null curriculum. This is the curriculum that students do not have the opportunity to learn because it is left out or not experienced. Referred to by Parkinson and Stooke (2012) as "silences and absences" (p. 72), the implicit message is that components are omitted and ignored because they are not important. While this happens as teachers develop the planned curriculum, the messaging to learners is that these omissions are of lesser or no importance (Holosko et al., 2010; Milner, 2010; Parkinson & Stooke, 2012). Some examples of the null curriculum include the omission of historical data, assuming students have certain pre-requisite knowledge or skills, or excluding different cultural groups when presenting societal beliefs and values.

Teacher actions and practices impact students in different educational contexts through the hidden curriculum. In primary schools, school structures and processes are controlled by adults. These, together with staff interactions, contribute to the values, morals and character education of children through ceremonies and rituals, service learning experiences, sporting events, social activities and classroom management practices (Acar, 2012; Çubukçu, 2012; Swaminathan, 2007).

The hidden curriculum and culture

The hidden curriculum and school culture are connected through relationships and socialisation. Walton (2018) found the hidden curriculum impacts school culture in various ways, despite its seemingly invisible nature:

> These invisible attitudes, competencies, dispositions, and social skills have become embedded into the formal and informal structures of schooling, providing a grounding framework that gives rise to the school culture overall. (p. 6)

Cotton et al. (2013) found the hidden curriculum was more influential with groups of students where exposure was frequent, rather than with individual students and isolated

incidents. Vang (2006) noted that the hidden curriculum shapes people of different cultures into a particular way, and referred to it as an "underlying agenda that affects students" (p. 21). This was affirmed by Rahman (2013) who found the dominance of Western culture through the hidden curriculum overtook Indigenous people's cultural understandings and practices through socialisation. Walton (2018) recognised the tension with socialisation through the hidden curricula, as they can help:

> socialize students into the current ways of being in a school while contributing to the reproduction of societal inequity. (p. 6)

Walton advised educators to be transparent and become explicit in naming and teaching the hidden curricula, so students could identify and recognise its presence in school.

Through the hidden curriculum, socialisation exhibits practice architectures that shape students into the school's dominant beliefs, values and ways of being and doing (Martin et al., 2004). Culture is socially reproduced through the language, actions, and relatings of hidden curricular practices, by referencing and reinforcing the values, attitudes and beliefs associated with the dominant culture (Bardes, 2004; Dearn, 2004; Hooper, 2008; Varpalotai, 1987). The interconnected relationship between the hidden curriculum, socialisation and school culture are significant for students. Through the hidden curriculum, there are unsaid messages, implicit actions and taken for granted relationships that exist which hold practices and activities in place. These are now considered from the literature in light of the school's practices and rituals.

The significance of traditions and practices

Through the hidden curriculum and as students regularly engage in school practices, rituals and events, hidden messages are relayed in relation to what is acceptable or not in the school's environment (Anderson, 2001; Edwards & Carmichael, 2012; Quinn & Barth,

2014). While some of these practices are in response to instructions or expectations, they convey hidden messages regarding appropriate actions, behaviours and group participation. For example, students standing or sitting as directed during worship, participating in prayers during devotion (in the case of faith-based schools), learning how to listen and respond to speakers, greeting people socially in the school or having play equipment confiscated when it has not been packed away.

The ways in which practices are enacted have a direct relationship to an organisation's traditions and rituals, their implied cultural messages and socialisation (Hall, 2013; Lawrence et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2004; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015; Willis et al., 2021). Current students have a level of familiarity with the cultural practices and routines of the school. Newer students notice school routines, rituals and practices that are different from their previous experiences. While they may find them unusual or even strange, with repetition over time the strange becomes familiar and the familiar becomes accepted (Çubukçu, 2012; Hope, 2012). Lovat and Smith (2003) liken this to the process of 'consciousness saturation' whereby:

> life experiences that produce our individual and group ideologies are so pervasive in their effects that we are not aware of their influence … our way of being and making sense of the world is the same for everybody else. (p. 30)

They also explain that "conscious saturation of the hidden curriculum comes from the continuous customs, rules, relationships and rituals in which students engage in school time" (Lovat & Smith, 2003, p. 35). As school practices, traditions and rituals occur regularly, they reinforce the dominant cultural practices through associated values and beliefs, which become taken for granted in the context of the school community. Kemmis et al. (2014) refer to these as 'practice traditions', which are "making and remaking the

world of yesterday, in the world of today" and are viewed as "the way we do things around here" (p. 78). Niemi and Loukomies (2020) explain:

> According to Schatzki (2010, p. 4), what people do today is rooted in the past and oriented towards the future … For an individual teacher, for example, practice traditions are practices similar to those that have been meaningful and significant in the past. (p. 4)

The school in this research is a "school of the Lutheran Church of Australia" (Personal communication, 2017). Christian practices, activities and traditions are underpinned by Lutheran theological beliefs and values, which have meaning and are connected to the past through its practice architectures.

3.5   LEA guiding documents

Documentation, policies and resources developed for the early years, primary and secondary Lutheran education contexts are informed by Lutheran theology, as discussed in Chapter Two. LEA guiding documents are considered in this section as they inform readers of the 'what, why and how' of Lutheran education. The documents include *Growing Deep: Leadership and Formation Framework*, *A Vision for Learners and Learning*, the *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework* and the *LIFE Curriculum* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022f).

Growing Deep

Growing Deep: Leadership and Formation Framework (Growing Deep) (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016) describes the Lutheran approach to education as informed by the theological teachings of the Lutheran church. This framework explains foundational statements about Lutheran education which "provides a way of seeing and being in Lutheran education" (p. 7) (Figure 5). In addition, vocational practices illuminate "what we

do in Lutheran education" (p. 8) while capabilities describe "how we do what we do in

Lutheran education" (p. 10).

Figure 5 - Our Foundation from *Growing Deep* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016) – used with permission.

As *Growing Deep* is informed by Lutheran theology, core Lutheran values, beliefs,

traditions, underlying assumptions and practices surface through statements and

explanations of the framework. Through this framework and via socialisation, the practices

of the informal curriculum shape people associated with Lutheran education.

Growing Deep describes the following in relation to school culture in a Lutheran context:

> Lutheran education workplace culture describes the atmosphere or climate of the
> work environment. It is the perception of how it feels to work in Lutheran education,
> within a particular location, office, school, or team. It is the environment we are
> aspiring to create – a culture of fostering educational excellence that is immersed in a
> Christ-centred approach to education – where all we do and say is based on our desire
> to see every person thrive and flourish in their work and life. Service in response to
> God's love is at the heart of all that we do. (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016, p. 34)

This explanation weaves school workplace culture together with the informal curriculum through the Lutheran lens. In addition, the practice architectural approach referenced by Kemmis and Edwards-Groves (2018) surfaces through the school environment as it is generated through the sayings, doings and relatings of the practices present in the school community.

A Vision for Learners and Learning

Produced by an education team of leaders and practitioners in Lutheran education, *A Vision for Learners and Learning:*

> provides an overview of the fundamental beliefs and paradigms of learning that shape Lutheran schooling … It is a treasure trove for our values, for service learning, for lifelong qualities and for so many aspects of what we strive for in the exciting learning and serving places that Lutheran schools are and want to be. It summarises what we in Lutheran schools value. (Lutheran Education Australia, 2013, p. ii)

A Vision for Learners and Learning considers the values and beliefs as informed by Lutheran theology and how they shape learning in Lutheran education. It includes a framework for Lutheran schools with a vision for the lifelong qualities for learners, aspirational statements of abilities and attributes and core values of learners that reflect the characteristics of God (Lutheran Education Australia, 2013). This is significant because it clarifies the anticipated intentions of the informal curriculum and does not hide the vision for young people to be shaped through the practices of Lutheran schooling.

Material in this publication is supported by scriptural references that are interpreted and explained from a Lutheran theological perspective, which was discussed in Chapter Two. *A Vision for Learners and Learning* blends Lutheran values, beliefs and the approach to teaching, learning and service of young people. It brings together practices of the informal curriculum with key Lutheran theological beliefs and values that enable school culture to evolve and influence people through the practices associated with Lutheran education.

Christian Studies documents

The two publications available for teachers of Christian Studies in Lutheran schools include the *LIFE Curriculum (LIFE)* and the *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework* (Jennings, 2009; Lutheran Education Australia, 2022f).

LIFE was developed for Australian teachers from 1999 as a "curriculum for Christian Studies developed for Lutheran schools" (Board for Lutheran Schools, 1999, p. 4). It provided a menu of resources and ideas from which teachers selected material to develop their formal Christian Studies curriculum. While *LIFE* was designed to grow student knowledge and understanding of the Christian faith based on Lutheran theology, the ultimate aims of *LIFE* were for students to know God and have faith in God. Therefore, with the formal Christian Studies curriculum came an informal yet stated hope and aim for students (Board for Lutheran Schools, 1999).

In 2005, the *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework (CSCF)* was published in response to needs by schools for a curriculum framework. The *CSCF* provides this framework for teachers of Christian Studies in Lutheran education. While not prescriptive, it gives flexibility to Christian Studies teachers to plan contextual units of work for learners using a pedagogical approach that can be adapted to the needs of learners, their learning and their environment (Lutheran Education Australia, 2015). Christian Studies continues to be "a learning area that belongs to the formal curricular program of the Lutheran school" (p. 5). For students, it is part of the whole Christian education experience of Lutheran education that includes the school's cultural activities and other learning experiences, including Christian practices and traditions informed by the LCA.

While Christian Studies is a formal learning area in Lutheran education, there are also informal hopes and aspirations stated for students who are part of the Lutheran school community. The blending of the practices of the informal curriculum as informed by Lutheran theology, with the school's cultural practices shapes who the students are becoming as they undertake a Lutheran education.

Limitations of the LEA material

Growing Deep provides a framework and statements that bring together adult perspectives of culture, the informal curriculum and the Lutheran school context. What additional insights can be provided from the perspectives of students?

The literature illuminates the relationships between culture and the informal curriculum. *Growing Deep* provides a Lutheran theological connection, yet an understanding of the dominant theological concepts and where and how they impact culture with curriculum is not clear. Previous research by Marks (2000) provided significant and valuable insights to Lutheran theology and culture, with occasional references to the informal curriculum as it surfaces through Christian education and towards the development of students.

As new staff commence employment in a Lutheran school, they engage in the formational programs of *Connect* and *Equip* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2022e). While these programs socialise and inform new staff of dominant cultural perspectives, how might these programs shape the discourse used or not, the actions taken or discouraged, and the relationships between staff and students?

There appears to be a gap in the literature of practice theory and site ontology as they apply to the cultural perspectives of Lutheran schools. How might the practices related to socialisation shape the cultural perspectives of students and staff? What are the underlying

assumptions, beliefs and values that enable the 'happeningness' of practices in this site? Which practices are more dominant and what impacts do they have on the students, staff and parents?

3.6   Summary of the literature reviewed

In this chapter, cultural perspectives were considered through a site ontological lens and the theory of practice architectures, including the impact of socialisation. This was followed by a review of the literature on organisational and school culture. Literature on the school curriculum was reviewed to include the formal, informal, hidden and null curricula for schools. The third part of this chapter focused on key guiding LEA documents as they apply to Lutheran education.

A site ontological approach combined with the theory of practice architectures provides a way of interpreting the "sayings, doings and relatings of practices" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 2) in the school as they happen through the formal and informal curriculum. While the social life of the school consists of "nexuses of practices and material arrangements" (Schatzki, 2010, p. 129) that unfold through learning experiences, the activities and interactive experiences across people in the school is of interest in this research. The formal and informal life of the school is considered and interpreted through the relationships, words and actions of individuals and their social world.

Lutheran theology, the informal curriculum and school culture are intertwined in a web of practices and actions. Lutheran school traditions and rituals provide students and families with experiences that are underpinned by traditions and practices from the Lutheran church. As people interconnect and relate in intersubjective space, they shape and are shaped by the school's practice architectures that regulate practices. While Lutheran

theology, the informal curriculum and site ontologies may seem separate, they operate

closely and harmoniously as an interconnected web of activity. When these practices are

intertwined and 'hang together' to become new living practices or systems, they develop

their own life as an ecology of practices (Kemmis, 2014; Schatzki, 2022; Thorkelsdóttir,

2016; Wilkinson, 2021).

In the chapter that follows, the design of the research is explained, including an overview

of the theoretical framework used in this research. The methods used in this research are

described for the data as it was gathered, analysed and summarised to illuminate the main

practices.

4 Methodology

4.1 Setting the scene for the methodology

This chapter explains the research design and processes, commencing with an overview of the theoretical framework foundational to the research. The choice of ethnographic case study methodology is discussed and the methods described. The section is followed by a discussion of the approaches employed for coding and data analyses, summary writings and the visuals that were developed to present key themes emerging from the research.

The research was a single, ethnographic case study which explored the site ontologies, practice architectures and culture/s of one Lutheran primary school in South Australia (SA). Through the methods of photo elicitation interviews (PEI), a principal interview, the researcher reflective journal and documents and artefacts, data was gathered, coded, summarised and visually represented to identify key themes. Students, staff and parents were invited to participate in the research and share their personal perspectives, experiences, understandings and feelings about the school's culture.

The research contributes to knowledge on the method of PEI, the inclusion of student perspectives in school cultural research, and fills a gap in Australian and international research on the cultural perspectives of Lutheran schools.

4.2 Epistemological grounding

This research explored cultural practices in a school context using a constructionist epistemology, which is based on the understanding that individuals construct meaning

from experiences in life and from engaging with their world and other people (Andrews, 2012). According to Crotty (1998), constructionism:

> is the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality … is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context. (p. 90)

Crotty further explains that different people have their own interpretation and meaning of the same scenario or reality. Therefore, it is important in this research to gather a variety of perspectives from different people to assist in the process of developing a deep understanding of culture at this school.

As the researcher using a constructionist epistemology, I embedded myself in the school for several weeks by engaging with several research participants, as shown in Appendix E. Meaning was interpreted and constructed from a firsthand account of daily life in the school. Various forms of data were gathered during photographic and interviewing experiences from students, staff and parents in the school, from observations during visits at the school and also researcher reflections that included field notes.

As the research explores experiences and related meanings, symbolic interactionism was the type of interpretivist theoretical perspective used in the research. Crotty (1998) states that symbolic interactionism "deals directly with issues such as language, communication, interrelationships and community" (p. 24). According to Ezzy (2002), symbolic interactionism "emphasises the influence of meanings, or the symbolic significance of peoples' experiences" (p. 4). In this research, the elements of language referred to included signs, symbols and images which were photographed and explained by the research participants. Participant interviews provided insights to the activities, events and celebrations for this school with their related practice architectures that exhibited interwoven "sayings, doings and relatings" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 348).

As discussed in Chapter Three, this research draws on a site ontological approach and practice architectures. Practices have purpose and consist of small, interconnected activities that are meshed together. Practices exhibit specific and bundled ways of being, where people engage in the "sayings, doings and relatings" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 16) of these practices with others and with the world. Practice architectures are the conditions needed for these practices to exist. They hold the practices in place and give the site, in this case the school, its social life or its way of being (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).

4.3   Theoretical perspective and framework

The initial conceptual framework proposed for this research was based on the layers or levels of cultural analysis from Schein (2010) that assist in developing and understanding organisational culture. In addition, the framework brings together the notion of "practices and material arrangements" by Schatzki (2005, p. 471) and the theory of practice architectures by Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) discussed in Chapter Three. This framework shown in Figure 6, was used to develop the research questions and is now explained.

The top layer of the framework represents tangible artefacts, the middle layer includes the organisation's espoused beliefs and values, and the base layer represents underlying assumptions or taken-for-granted beliefs and values (Schein, 2010). The layers represented above can also be shown as an onion-like model with the artefacts as the outer layer through to the inner core as the underlying assumptions. The conceptual framework includes symbolic sayings, doings and relatings of the theory of practice architectures, as contextual elements of site ontology permeate through the layers (Cooke & Gibbs, 2020; Mahon et al., 2017; Thorkelsdóttir, 2022; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). The practices and

material arrangements (Mahon et al., 2017; Schatzki, 2005) permeate the entire framework because of their presence and influence in the life and operations of the school. However, as referred to in Chapter Three and noted by Kemmis (2012), Mahon et al. (2017) and Wilkinson (2021), relatings are implied by Schatzki but not included in the site ontological approach.
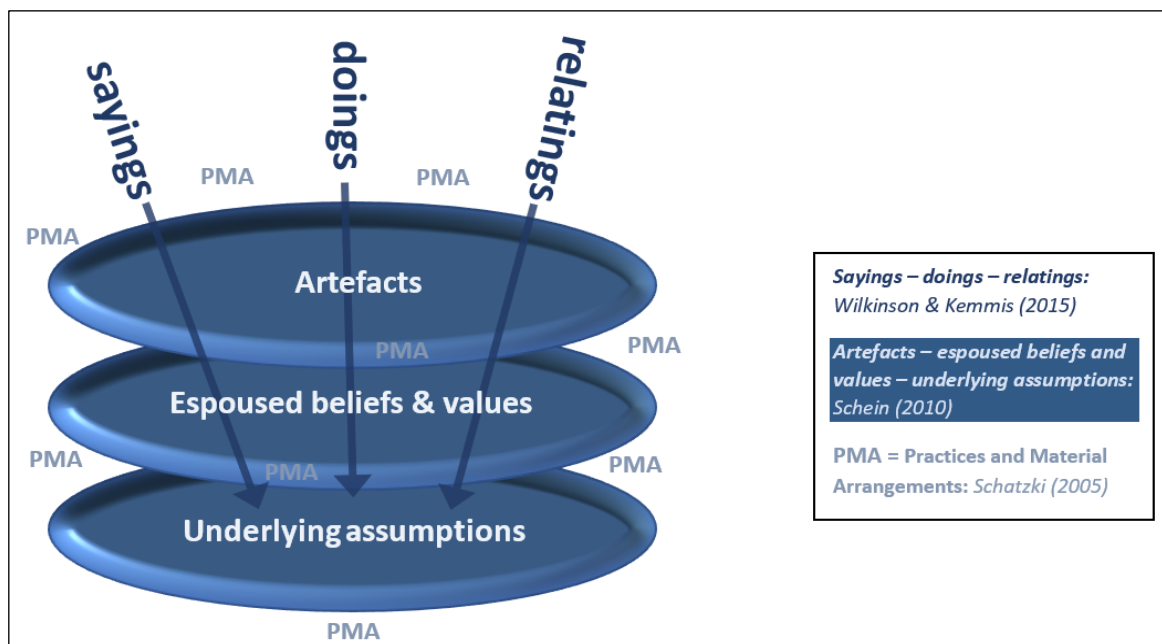
Figure 6 - Conceptual framework for the research

4.4 Ethics and permissions

The Flinders University Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee granted approval for this research in February 2017. This approval together with the *Information Sheet* is provided in Appendices A and B respectively. Permission to conduct this research in one Lutheran Primary school in South Australia was provided by the Executive Director of Lutheran Education Australia (Appendix C), and the Executive Director of the Lutheran Schools Association for SA, NT and WA (Appendix D).

Before the research commenced, the school contact person distributed information about the research to prospective participants. Willing adult participants gave written permission

to be involved in the research, and parents or guardians gave permission for their child to participate in the research (Appendix W). As the research began and to ensure participants were willing, consent was reconfirmed for the adults and verbal assent received by the students (Boucher, 2017; Kemmis et al., 2014; Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015).

A potential risk noted in the ethics application related to the possible identification of people at the school. Participants have been assured that all data will remain confidential. However, it is not possible to guarantee anonymity for any of the research components. The intention has always been to keep the name and location of the school anonymous. However, photographs of some of the school's places, artefacts and play areas may be known to readers of this research if they have been at this school. While this is not seen as an issue for this research, it may be a distraction for some readers of the research.

4.5   Research questions

The overarching research question was, *How might community members of one Lutheran primary school in SA shape, and become shaped by, the culture/s of their school?* This question was considered through five guiding sub-questions that include:

- How do students, staff and parents reflect on and describe aspects of their school that they find special?

- How do the students', staff and parents' reflections and descriptions differ or align?

- How do the students', staff and parents' reflections and descriptions connect with the vision and mission statements of the school and the Lutheran Church of Australia?

- How do the students', staff and parents' perspectives interact to reflect the culture/s evident in the school?

- Emerging from the research, how has the school's culture/s developed and influenced the students, staff and parents?

4.6   Ethnographic case study

The purpose of this research was to illuminate deep understandings of social reality for the context of the research site (Holliday, 2016; Punch, 2014). The methodology most suitable for this research was an ethnographic case study because it considers the practices and patterns, behaviour and beliefs and values of the school (Creswell, 2014; Henry, 1993; Pickering, 2008; Pink, 2007). Stake (1995) explains that case study research focuses on the complexity and particularity of the case or system through the construction of knowledge, so that "multiple perspectives or views of the case" (p. 108) can be represented. The research was ethnographic in nature because of its focus on the cultural perspectives of people in a school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Punch, 2014). Pink (2013) explains ethnography as:

> a process of creating and representing knowledge or ways of knowing that are based on ethnographers' own experiences and the ways these intersect with the persons, places and things encountered during that process … It should account not only for the observable, recordable realities … but also for objects, visual images … the invisible and the sensory nature of human experience and knowledge. (p. 35)

Creswell (2014) further explains that case studies are ethnographic when they describe, analyse and interpret a group's "shared patterns of behaviour, beliefs, and language that develop over time" (p. 490). Therefore, a single, ethnographic case study was a highly relevant and appropriate choice in seeking to address the research questions.

As a single-site case study that accesses a small data set in a particular context and point in time, limitations exist because the findings are specific to this school. It is not appropriate to generalise and apply these findings to other Lutheran schools with different histories, community members and contexts (Harland, 2014; Marques et al., 2016; Merriam & Tisdell,

2016). Instead, the findings provide insights and learnings specific to this school's context that give indications, rather than claims about culture or theory.

4.7 Methods used in the research

The methods used in this research included PEI, a semi-structured interview, the researcher reflective journal, and documents and artefacts. The interpretation and perspectives of school culture from participants' experiences and interactions were gathered through PEI, where photographs were central to the interview process (Harper, 2002; Pink, 2007). An elaboration of PEI, including a brief history, is provided in the sections that follow.

Photo elicitation interviews

Photo elicitation as a method of research involves integrating photographs into interviews with participants, who respond to semi-structured interview questions. Where photographs are provided by the interviewer for the interviewee, the interviewer maintains a controlled environment and forms understandings based on the same scenarios or topics (Stanczak, 2007). The approach in this research was different. In response to a question, research participants took their own photographs using a digital device, so the photographs became a focal point during the interview process. This is referred to as auto-driven photo elicitation (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Shaw, 2013; Stanczak, 2007) or photovoice (Harper, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rasmussen, 2014; Rose, 2016). Auto-driven PEI minimises researcher influence (Boucher, 2017; Stanczak, 2007) because research participants take their own photographs and choose which ones become the focus, "thus reducing the unequal power relationship" (Johnson, 2008, p. 81). The need to minimise researcher bias and identify potential biases were named in the ethics

application, with additional reflections shared later in this chapter and also as discussion in Chapter Seven.

Semi-structured and open-ended interview questions focused on the photographs taken by participants. The questions asked why different photographs were identified by participants as being special for them about their school, and what else they could share about their photographs. In most cases, there was little further questioning needed because the participants spoke freely about their chosen photographs that illuminated meaning for them. Further details on the interview process are found later in this chapter.

History of PEI

The use of photographs during interviews was initially explored by John Collier (1957). In a research experiment, the control group included a group of participants interviewed without photographs. A second group of participants was interviewed with photographs, which became known as picture or photographic interviews. Collier (1957) identified a notable difference in the quality of responses between the two groups:

> The material obtained with photographs was precise and at times even encyclopedic … impressively longer and more complete … [and] invited group participation. (p. 857)

As Collier explored further benefits of inserting photographs and visuals into interviews, he found participants elicited insights with deeper meaning, comprehension and richness. Consequently, qualitative research interviews with inserted photographs became known as photo elicitation interviews or PEI (Harper, 2002, 2016; Shaw, 2013; Stanczak, 2007).

Equipment and young people

Photographic equipment has advanced from instant-picture and disposable cameras to digital cameras, enabling the development of PEI over time. Now that smartphones and portable digital devices have inbuilt cameras, the photographic quality, access and ease in

taking photographs have improved (Ndione & Remy, 2018; Yamada-Rice, 2017). Young people are very familiar with taking and viewing images to the extent it has become "the new currency for social interaction" (van Dijck, 2008, p. 62). This was a notable and strong advantage in this research involving primary school-aged students. The interview process flowed naturally after the children took their digital photographs. As a method with children, PEI facilitated conversation resulting from the engagement and emotional connection with photographs that they chose to take, rather than conceptually based thought processes. Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015) explain PEI to be an ideal method to engage the voices and perspectives of students.

Empowering participants

Bogdan and Biklen (2006) shared that "researchers use photographs to probe how people define their world; they can reveal what people take for granted" (p. 145). This implies what people deeply value can be elicited from interviews with their photographs because the images taken capture insights into the interviewee's world. Similarly, Rose (2016) recognised that PEI empowers participants because it provides insights of social phenomenon and elicits different talk with more emotion. In relation to the framework developed for this research, the taken-for-granted aspects were drawn out from the participants to understand cultural practices more fully. The photographs became bridging tools for communication during interviews (Shaw, 2013), which helped participants feel comfortable during the interview process.

Harper (2002) noticed a different kind of information was evoked from interviewees through PEI, which included feelings and memories associated with identity, culture and community. As participants connect with the photograph, new knowledge can be elicited with deeper, reflective narrations (Pink, 2013). Participants "bring to the fore normally

unspoken dimensions of experience, meaning and knowing" which leads to "understanding participants' perspectives in new ways" (Pink, 2013, p. 95). PEI reverses the focus of the interview from the researcher to the subject. It empowers the interviewee as they become the observer and interpreter of photographs, and allows their identity, culture, values, judgements, place in the world and relationships to be revealed (Ndione & Remy, 2018; Shaw, 2013; Smith & Woodward, 1998).

Benefits in using PEI

There are many benefits of using PEI with adults and children in research. While Shaw (2013) summarised the benefits of auto-driven PEI from various researchers, the benefits as experienced through my research included that PEI:

- helps interview participants take the lead and teach the interviewer, …
- sharpens memory,
- relieves participants' stress of being the subject of an interview, …
- breaks the "frame" of the interviewer's interpretation of the interview and allows interviewees to interpret their reality in their own voices, …
- often produces unpredictable information, …
- tends to increase interviewee buy-in because it is engaging, and
- lessens the awkwardness of an interview because there is something upon which to focus. (Shaw, 2013, pp. 787-788)

PEI through the perspectives of children

PEI has proven especially valuable with children. Clark (1999) used PEI with chronically ill children and found this child-centred method illuminates their feelings and experiences, and allows them to interpret and verbalise their emotions. Clark-Ibanez (2004) recognised that photography allowed children to access tangible and intangible perspectives of their lives with data that "was creative for the children and helped them develop a skill (picture taking, verbal communication, and analysis)" (p. 1508).

In more recent work, Clark-Ibanez (2008) and Rose (2016) advocate using PEI with children in research. It engages them, improves the quality of the interview through the photographs acting as a visible prompt, allows children to take photographs of objects and places that an adult could ignore, empowers the child through agency and turns images into symbols that represent meaning with a story. Knowing these potential benefits affirmed the decision to use PEI with children and also with the adults in this research.

Potential challenges with PEI

Some challenges of PEI were identified by Clark-Ibanez (2004). Equipment can be lost or damaged when loaned to people for periods of time. To minimise this risk in my research, participants used the portable device to take photographs at the school during the allocated interview time and in view of me as researcher. Another potential challenge exists when children take inappropriate photographs. To ease this concern and before children were given the device, I initiated a conversation with them about suitable and inappropriate photographs. Inappropriate photographs included photographs of indecent or offensive behaviour, or where people were engaged in private acts that might occur in the bathroom. As the students agreed that these photographs would not be appropriate, I assumed they understood this requirement and do not believe this altered their choice of photographs. Clark (1999) proposed additional cautions to consider when working with children. Researchers need to be patient and sensitive with children, as their pace and style is different to that of adults. In addition, there may be adjustments needed to the language used by adults, so the children are clear on tasks and questions asked of them, as adopted in this research. Rather than using the more complex concept of 'school culture', the phrase 'special for you in this school' was more appropriate to include in the research task.

The interview process

The principal and school contact person from the research school recruited participants for this research, meaning the data may have been biased to reflect more positive accounts of this school. The school contact person organised and coordinated the times and groupings of student interviews, and the interview schedules for staff and parents. While students were mostly organised in year-level pairings, one group had three students and one interview was with one student. All adults were interviewed individually. Before participants began taking photographs to commence the interview, demographic data was gathered and the PEI process was explained. The question guide used for students, staff and parents in this research is found in Appendix F.

The principal responded to demographic questions followed by semi-structured interview questions in developing an understanding of the school's culture. While the semi-structured interview needed careful planning, its style was flexible and helped in learning about the social world and culture of this organisation (Doody & Noonan, 2013; Galletta & Cross, 2013; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

Good research practice includes asking open instead of leading questions, including all components of the data, being consistent in following question protocols, remaining professionally competent with all participants, listening to understand rather than judging and being open to new findings (Boucher, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). These practices were followed throughout this research.

Researcher reflective journal

So that knowledge could be captured during the research, a reflective journal consisting of three components documented researcher perspectives of school visits. Time was taken to

reflect on the language, actions, and relational experiences of the interviews and time at the school as they related to the conceptual framework by using field notes, interview reflections or a personal narrative.

Field notes

Field notes as one component of the researcher reflective journal, (Boucher, 2017; Kemmis et al., 2014; Wellard & McKenna, 2001) were described by Kemmis et al. (2014) as "observations about *other people or things*" (p. 180, italics in original). The notes I documented included key words, jottings and short sentences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). These notes were made after reflecting on experiences during play breaks or following casual conversations with individual staff to record ideas, feelings and hunches. The field notes related to research participants were coded and included with respective participants' codes and summaries (Appendices J, K and L). General field notes were coded, with key themes included with the researcher reflective journal summary (Appendix M).

Interview reflections

Interview reflections were documented immediately following each interview. While these reflections could be referred to as observations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Punch, 2014), they were named interview reflections because they were directly connected to the interview experiences with each research participant and helped to capture valuable ideas (Seidman, 2013). They included key words, hunches from an interview, overarching ideas and themes, or other observations that emerged from the interview experience. As for the field notes, the interview reflections that directly related to research participants were coded and included with respective participants' codes and summaries (Appendices J, K

and L). General interview reflections were coded and key themes included with the researcher reflective journal summary (Appendix M).

Personal narrative

The third component of the journal was a personal narrative. Holliday (2016) defined this as "any form of narrative which recalls past experience" (p. 138). Following school visits and during the drive home, I reflected deeply on the day's events, experiences and conversations to make sense of them (Qu & Dumay, 2011), and documented these reflections at the end of the day and while they were current. Thoughts, experiences and perspectives were distilled and synthesised through this reflexive[2] process, as deeper insights and perspectives were added to the personal narrative (Pickering, 2008; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Stanczak, 2007). The personal narrative was coded and included with the researcher reflective journal (Appendix M).

Documents and artefacts

Documents and artefacts gathered from the school during visits and from online platforms provided evidence of historical and current records (Deal & Peterson, 2016a). Kemmis et al. (2014) suggest these items should be available and naturally accessible in the course of normal school life. They show how the school's culture is represented through words and images, which are available to the school community and the public (Holliday, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). Punch (2014) explains that "[a]ll documentary sources are the result of human activity, produced on the basis of certain ideas, theories or commonly accepted, taken-for-granted principles" (p. 196). This means such documents

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2 I use reflexive here to refer to the interplay between interpreting, questioning and challenging the ideas in sense-making from the photographic elicitation interview.

are connected to the underlying assumptions of the conceptual framework for this research. The variety of accessible materials sourced publicly, online and through researcher photographs of school artefacts, were valuable data for this research.

4.8   Researcher positionality

Merriam and Tisdell (2016) suggest that researcher positionality be considered to alleviate biases when conducting research. This was considered and identified throughout the research process with my research supervisors. Two considerations include the school selection process in section 4.10, and the benefits and challenges of PEI in section 4.7.

An additional but significant positional consideration was my status as an 'outside' or 'inside' researcher with the school (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As I had no prior knowledge or connections with the students, parents and some staff, I was unfamiliar with the research school's physical, social or community structures and practices and was an 'outsider' to them. It meant I had an open mind to the research experience, the participants I would meet and their stories.

To some staff I was an 'insider' because of the years I have served in the Lutheran system, and my regional office work as workshop facilitator with Lutheran school teachers of Christian Studies (Chapter Two). Mitigating potential conflicts of interest was important, so several actions were taken. I was cautious to enter the school site with an open mind and be the "stranger learning culture … setting aside judgements about the expected" (Holliday, 2016, p. 21). Some staff were excluded from the staff interview selection pool because of my past professional connections with them. There was also a risk that my positional authority as an employee of the regional Lutheran education office was an issue for some staff. However, with the school principal's public support of me and through other staff

conversations, any staff concerns were eased quickly. Staff discovered this research was separate from my regional office work. It was conducted in my own time and in response to a personal interest in Lutheran education.

I was aware that being an 'insider' to the Lutheran education system had its advantages when accessing public Lutheran education resources and theological material. I was familiar with Lutheran school practices, rituals and worship expectations, and had prior knowledge and understanding of artefacts, beliefs and values as they surface in the practices of the school. While this helped in developing understandings of participants' perspectives and the social life of the school, I still needed to attend to the research with an open mind and avoid making assumptions about the participants or practices.

Being aware of researcher positionality enabled a more reflexive approach to be taken. The research trustworthiness was affirmed when analysing data and sharing research outcomes with Higher Degree Research (HDR) colleagues and my research supervisors (Boucher, 2017; Pink, 2007; Qu & Dumay, 2011; Stanczak, 2007).

4.9   Benefits of the pilot study

Literature on qualitative studies recommends research practices such as questioning and data gathering be piloted before beginning one's research (Creswell, 2008; Yin, 2014). Pilots help the researcher to adjust their language, consider questions asked of all participants, and realise the importance of giving thinking or waiting time for responses.

The opportunity to run a pilot study four months prior to the commencement of the research with six children of similar ages to that proposed for the research, was invaluable. Some practicalities of PEI were unknown. These included the logistics of children taking photographs on a school site with a portable device, whether questioning younger children

on their perspectives would be appropriate, and the order, depth and complexity of questions and instructions required.

The auto-driven PEI pilot study increased my confidence and affirmed the suitability of auto-driven PEI for the age groups being considered. The logistics of the photographic and questioning process were refined and developed in consistency as each child was involved in the pilot. Some of the logistics included identifying boundaries and guidelines, providing word clarifications and finding an easy way for the children to remember the task.

Children in the pilot provided honest and reflective feedback on the task, the nature and style of questions, the language used and my dispositions during the pilot. The learning from this pilot experience enhanced the data gathered from research participants, improved consistency, and heightened personal awareness of the words and language appropriate for children as they engaged in the task. A memory that remains was the use of the words 'important' or 'special' in the questions. To an eight-year-old child, 'important' meant what was necessary for a new student to know about, and included the bathroom, where food is eaten during breaks, and some of the school's routines. This child shared that 'special' had more meaning and feeling, so it would be better to use 'special' in my questions (Personal communication, December 2016).

4.10   School selection process

The decision was made to conduct research with one Lutheran primary school. The research participants would generate a significant amount of data from PEI, the researcher reflective journal, and the documents and artefacts. Conducting this research with more schools would make it difficult to keep to the word limit for the Doctor of Education thesis.

This minimised potential bias due to work circumstances, as my previous employment has been in the Lutheran secondary school context. Other considerations that related to the school selection process included:

- school enrolment numbers should total at least 200 students to provide an adequate sampling pool across different year levels

- any schools where members of my family have attended or worked would be excluded to minimise potential further bias

- proximity to the school from my home to be feasible for consecutive half or full day visits

- a standalone Lutheran primary school with minimal secondary school influences

- a school where the researcher's professional work connections were minimal

- the principal to have held their position for at least 12 months.

Statistical data from Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) on Lutheran schools in Australia obtained for the 2016 Non-Government Schools Census (Lutheran Education Australia, 2017) helped to identify potential schools for this research. LEA statistical data national averages showed that:

- 16% of Lutheran primary school students enrolled were Lutheran

- 42% of staff employed in a Lutheran primary school were Lutheran (Lutheran Education Australia, 2017).

More detailed 2016 Lutheran primary school statistical data from LEA showed that of the 20 SA Lutheran primary schools in existence, 30% of student enrolments were Lutheran. As this is considerably higher than the national average of 16% (Personal communication, February 2017), there may be implications for responses associated with Christianity and Lutheranism that reveal a greater emphasis on the findings related to Lutheran school

culture. The shortlist of prospective schools was closely aligned to the LEA statistical data for religious affiliation of students and staff and the other considerations noted above.

The principal of each prospective school was approached via a telephone call until an affirmative response was received, as per ethics approval. After receiving signed permission forms, further documentation was shared at a meeting in the school with the principal and school contact person. This meeting enabled the research to be planned and negotiations to be considered as they related to research practicalities, school communication strategies, dates and timeframes for the contact visits and scheduled dates in which to gather the data.

In respect of ethics and during the meeting at the school with the school contact person, discussions included the selection and number of research participants to be managed by the school contact person. I requested that research participants be mixed genders, have mixed levels of experience with this school, be willing to engage in this research, and currently be part of the school community as a student, staff member or parent. All PEI permission and consent forms required to conduct this research were left with the school contact person to distribute, collect and forward to me as researcher.

4.11   Who were the participants?

The participants invited to contribute to this research came from the student, staff and parent cohorts of one SA Lutheran primary school. Participants included 16 students, seven staff and five parents. The principal, as key leader of the school, was also invited and agreed to participate individually on behalf of the school.

Significance of involving children

As discussed in the previous chapter, the literature search revealed that while adults often participate in research, the voices of primary school-aged students are not regularly included. Tertiary and secondary students may have voices in research, but the primary and particularly the early years' student groups are rarely heard. Christensen and James (2017) recognised that earlier research was on children as objects rather than their voices being included in research data. This means the reality is that "childhood and children's lives were explored solely through the views and understandings of their adult caretakers who claim to speak for them" (Christensen & James, 2017, p. 4). Yamada-Rice (2017) explains that with increased access and familiarity with digital technologies, the opportunities for researchers to develop new ways of gathering visual research data from children and young people has increased significantly. According to Lewis and Lindsay (2000), more attention has been given to children as researchers:

> It is timely … to embody the spirit and intent of the UN Convention and ensure the children are given a voice … including for the development and implementation of research. (p. 32)

This quote relative to the mid-1990s implies there has been action towards the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989). It recognises that children have valid perspectives and ideas that should be included in decisions that affect them. The significance of involving student voice in research has also been endorsed by Mockler and Groundwater-Smith (2015), Quaglia and Fox (2018) and Thomson (2008).

In the context of research on the culture of Lutheran schools, students have not previously been asked their perspectives. It was therefore intentional in this research that more than half of the research participants be students.

4.12 School engagements

The schedule for engagements at the school for informal visits and PEI with participants is shown in Table 1.

February 2017	Final ethics approval
March 2017	Research school identified and permissions granted
May 2017	Initial site contact visits, researcher presence, field notes recorded
June 2017	Parent PEI
June-Aug 2017	Principal and staff PEI
August 2017	Student PEI

Table 1 - Research schedule

In the two weeks before interviews commenced and as negotiated with the principal, four informal visits to observe the school's activities, events and practices were scheduled. These visits were planned so that I would be seen by the children as a familiar and trusted person in the school community. According to Merewether (2015) and Pink (2013), being a seen and familiar person by children is an important consideration when working with children. The informal visits increased my familiarity with the school site and its surroundings, and provided experiences of a variety of school routines and practices on different weekdays. I became a visible presence to students, their families and staff and developed informal connections with full and part-time staff. I spoke with staff at morning briefings, visibly roamed around children's play areas during recess and lunch breaks, spoke with students and duty staff and visited classrooms during teaching blocks. I made field notes and started the personal narrative during these visits.

As arranged by the school contact person and with the support of the principal, interviews were scheduled on days when I was present at the school in the months of June, July and

August. The parent interviews happened at the start or end of the school day to coincide with parents taking their children to or from school. While some classroom teaching staff were released from their classes to participate in the interviews, other staff interviews happened during their scheduled non-contact times or after school. Students were released from lessons such as art, music, library or physical education during the school day to participate in the interviews.

As a researcher, I was present at the school on 14 different occasions over three months, totalling over 70 hours. The time engaged at the school in research, conversations and observations is recorded in Appendix E.

Demographics of the research school

2016 census data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2020) showed that the research school's township was between 25,000 to 28,000 persons, which was 1.57% of South Australia's population. Data on Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA) of the town where this school was located were used as they gave an indication of the ranking of "areas in Australia according to relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage" (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2018, p. 4). For the township, the indexes showed that a high percentage of residents were relatively disadvantaged, with little access to economic resources because of their lower incomes and wealth. Residents of this town generally did not hold qualifications, with employment being in low skilled occupations. These conditions inferred that life would be difficult financially, and that the children would be at a disadvantage when considering their future potential and wealth. Therefore, it is likely that a significant financial investment was made by families residing in this area to send their children to this Lutheran primary school.

Data from Lutheran Education Australia (2017) provided the research school's 2016 August census and other relevant figures for this research, as shown in Table 2.

Lutheran Education Australia 2016 Census school data						
Members	Research school: Lutheran	Research school: Other Christian	Research school: Other	National average: Lutheran total	Regional average for SA/NT/WA: Lutheran primary	Stage average: Lutheran primary
Students	21.8%	34.4%	43.8%	15.9%	23.1%	26.8%
Teachers	76%	24%	0%	43.5%	53%	60.7%

Table 2 - Religious affiliations (Lutheran Education Australia, 2017)

These figures show that the research school's Lutheran student enrolments were 6.1% higher than the national average and 5% less than the state average of 26.8%. However, the proportion of Lutheran teachers at this school was more than the national and state levels, meaning there was a stronger presence of Lutheran teachers in this school.

School census data showed that, at the time of conducting the research in August 2017, there were 374 students enrolled (Lutheran Primary School, 2017). The distribution of staff roles and the proportion of research participants are shown in Table 3. Of the seven staff research participants, six were teachers. Four of these were classroom teachers and two held leadership positions. Further data on the research participants is provided in Table 4.

Staff role	Number of staff	Percentage of staff	Number of research participants	Percentage of research participants
Teacher / Leader	28	72%	6	21%
Lutheran Schools Officer[3]	9	23%	1	11%
Other	2	5%	-	0%
Totals	**39**	**100%**	**7**	**-**

Table 3 – Staff roles (Lutheran Primary School, 2017)

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3 A Lutheran Schools Officer is an employee of a Lutheran school who is not a teacher, which may include a teacher's aide, office assistant, grounds person or finance assistant.

Participant group	Total	Gender		Denomination		
		F	M	Lutheran	Christian	Unsure/None
Parents (P)	5	4	1	1	4	0
Staff Members (SM)	7	4	3	5	2	0
Students (S)	16	8	8	3	6	7
Totals	28	16	12	9	12	7

Table 4 - Research participant data (Lutheran Primary School, 2017)

Of the 28 research participants, 57% were students, 25% were staff and 18% were parents. 19% of the student research participants were Lutheran, 71% of staff research participants were Lutheran and 20% of the parent participants were Lutheran. The percentages of research participants who were Lutheran was close to the state average proportions of Lutheran students in Table 2, meaning there was a fair representation of students as research participants. The staff group were skewed in favour of Lutheran representation. This raised the percentage of staff affiliated with the Lutheran church above the national, regional and state averages and caused a Lutheran bias in the research findings for staff.

4.13   Gathering the data

Auto-driven photo elicitation

As a major data source for this research, PEI involves participants using a portable digital device to take photographs that show what is special for participants about their school. Appendix F includes the PEI guidelines used with all participants to ensure a consistent approach was used when gathering data from participants. The participants for PEI included students from Year 2 through to Year 7 who were seven to twelve years of age, staff from 20 to 64 years of age, and parents from 35 to 44 years of age.

Recommendations from previous PEI researchers were followed. Rose (2016) suggests reminding participants to be respectful by avoiding photographing faces of people or of

private acts. Where people were included in photographs, participants were informed that faces would be obscured. In respecting this request, participants chose not to photograph people at close range. While the adults found this request easy to accommodate, some students wanted to photograph their friends. These students selected a place or object to represent their friends such as a classroom door or a poster, meaning their choice of photograph was adjusted to avoid the identification of their peers.

Interviews were recorded using an audio pen as an inconspicuous device for observers and participants, which began when participants started taking their photographs. Before audio recording began, consent was reconfirmed for the adults and assent received by the students (Rose, 2016; Taylor, 2018). Participants were encouraged to ask clarifying questions at any time during the PEI process.

Participants were invited to take at least five photographs but could take more. Holliday (2016) cautions researchers to avoid interfering with participants as they take their photographs, so I walked behind or alongside the participants. Students were offered a slip of paper with instructions of the photographic task to prompt them when walking around the school (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Clark, 1999), as shown in Phase 1 of Appendix F.

Captioning and ordering the photographs

The photographs were taken and a suitable space found where the participants were comfortable to talk further about their photographs. As suggested by Rose (2016), participants captioned each photograph to identify the photograph's focus which helps enrich the interview experience. Once captioned, the photographs were ordered according to their top three, four or five photographs relative to the specialness of the school for each

participant. A sample of one parent's top five captioned photographs for this school is shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7 - Ordered photographs from Parent 4

Captioning initiated the reflection phase on the photographs with participants by starting conversations that flowed smoothly to the interview questions. The captions were an additional data source for this research.

Interviews

PEI interviews centred on the top three, four or five photographs for each participant in a quiet area of the school, so they could share what was special about the photographs and their school. Students chose where to sit for the PEI interviews; adults had access to quiet areas where conversations flowed. The principal's semi-structured interview did not involve photographs, yet happened as we walked around the school grounds (Galletta & Cross, 2013; Qu & Dumay, 2011).

The PEI routine flowed positively well and enabled natural conversations to unfold with the participants. Interviewees explained why their first photograph was special for them about the school and shared a short story or explanation relative to the photograph or their experiences. This process was repeated with the remaining photographs that participants selected for the interview, with additional question prompts used to elicit further information (Phase 3 of Appendix F). Phase 4 of Appendix F includes the final questions asked as they related to new students and families. They helped interviewees shift their focus from the photographs and provide insights to core qualities or attributes of this school that elicited beliefs and values and underlying assumptions as per the conceptual framework.

Interview transcripts

As the researcher, it was important to re-live the interview experiences and reconstruct the interview encounters by transcribing them (Gubrium et al., 2012; McCormack, 2004; Wellard & McKenna, 2001). As suggested by Widodo (2014), an attentive listening approach was used. The participant's audio was replayed as a warm-up before transcribing, to relive and recall the interview experience. Once transcribed, the audio was listened to again for further analysis and interpretation. While this process was valuable, it was extremely time consuming, so a transcriber was hired for all remaining audios. After the transcripts were returned, I listened to the audios with each transcript several times to clarify anomalies and fill in some missing words. This was necessary with the student audios and transcripts because some softly spoken voices of the children were hard to hear and transcribe.

Transcriptions used a naturalist approach that "suggests that every instance of utterances should be transcribed in greater detail" (Widodo, 2014, p. 105). However, the natural flow

of the transcript's story was difficult to follow so all utterances such as 'umm', 'arhh' or 'err' were removed from transcripts. These denaturalised transcripts were member checked with the adult interviewees prior to coding and analysis (Langhout & Mitchell, 2008; Prosser, 2007; Shaw, 2013). Transcript samples are provided in Appendix Q for a student, Appendix R for a staff member and Appendix S for a parent.

Table 5 shows the data gathered from this research through PEI, the principal interview and researcher photographs. The photographs I took as researcher included artefacts, plaques and places in the school.

Item	Students	Staff	Principal	Parents	Researcher
Audios	16	6	1	5	-
Transcripts	16	6	1	5	-
Total photographs	163	64	0	27	43
Top photographs	69	25	0	21	-
Captions	69	25	-	21	-
Key themes	64	24	4	20	-

Table 5 - Data gathered from PEI

The researcher reflective journal

The reflective journal consisted of field notes, interview reflections and personal narratives, as discussed earlier in this chapter. They were used from the time of the first meeting with the school's principal. After each informal observation school visit or interview day, I set aside time to reflect on my encounters and experiences at the school. Reflections on perceived values, attitudes and beliefs of specific interviewees were kept with that person's records, as shown in the flow chart of Figure 8.

Documents and artefacts gathered

Items accessed were public documents, online material or visual artefacts. Public documents provided by school personnel and online material are listed in Appendix G and record details suggested by Bowen (2009), Merriam and Tisdell (2016) and Punch (2014). Holliday (2016) explains the importance of using documents in qualitative research because they "can also reveal secret, hidden worlds that are difficult to fathom through observed behaviour and events" (p. 80). The researcher photographs in Table 5 were classified as visual artefacts because they incorporated different items such as signs and symbols, artwork, plaques, meeting places, play areas, gardens and the school's vision and mission statement. As explained by Holliday (2016), these visual representations are important cultural elements to include as "physical representations of culture" (p. 78).

Limitations of this research

Positive responses

The research participants were asked to take photographs of what they perceived to be special or significant in their school. This meant positive affirmations of the school were anticipated in relation to people, regular activities, practices and special events. A limitation of this research was that mostly positive perspectives, memories, and stories were volunteered by research participants in the photographic and interview phases.

Assumptions and perceived researcher bias

On occasions, researcher assumptions were noted during the research and identified as appropriate. One included my own assumptions as an adult which I attempted to push aside when interpreting student perspectives. Other general assumptions caused a shift in my thinking and understanding, which have been identified in the findings and discussion.

As the researcher, I am an employee of a regional Lutheran education office. There may be a perceived bias in favour of Lutheran education because of the relationships I have developed over the years in different Australian Lutheran schools. Being aware of this potential bias however, I believe I was over-cautious in noting potential conflicts. Conversely and in support of this research, some school staff willingly shared additional perspectives. These were carefully scrutinised before inclusion with the field notes in the researcher reflective journal for analysis.

4.14 How the data was analysed

Data was collected throughout this research, from initial school visits through to the completion of all participant interviews. PEI with students, staff and parents produced data in the form of photographs, photograph captions and interview transcripts. While the principal did not take photographs, an interview transcript was developed from the recorded interview for analysis. As researcher at the school, field notes, interview reflections and a personal narrative were developed to form the researcher reflective journal. Public documents, online material and visual artefacts gathered were grouped as documents and artefacts.

Data flow from methods to findings

The flow chart in Figure 8 shows the data flow from the methods to the findings. It shows the methods used, data produced and grouped for analysis[4], summaries developed using written paragraphs, visual representations of participant transcripts and the findings

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4 VAB refers to the values, attitudes and belief codes (VAB) used in coding the transcripts with values (V), attitudes (A) and beliefs (B). Further explanation is found later in this chapter.

chapters for this case study. The brown arrows indicate the data flow for Chapter Five and the blue arrows show the data flow for Chapter Six.

Methods	Data	Analysis	Summaries	Visuals	Findings
Photo elicitation interviews	Photos / Captions / Transcripts	Grouped photos and captions			Chapter 5
Interview (of Principal)	Transcripts	VAB key themes / Summary VAB phrases	Written paragraphs	Students / Staff / Principal / Parents	Chapter 6
Researcher reflective journal	Field notes / Interview reflections / Personal narrative	VAB key themes / Summary VAB phrases	Written paragraphs		Chapter 6
Documents and artefacts	Public documents / Online material / Visual artefacts	VAB key themes / Summary VAB phrases	Written paragraphs		Chapter 6

Figure 8 - Flow chart showing methods, data and analysis

The section that follows summarises the analysis process for the photographs and captions that generated the findings for Chapter Five. Following that, the analysis process for all transcripts, the researcher reflective journal, and the documents and artefacts is summarised as they inform the findings in Chapter Six.

Working with the participant photographs and captions

Participant photographs and their captions were collated into a summary document for each participant with their captions. Their top three, four or five photographs appear first, followed by all other photographs. A student sample of captioned and ordered photographs is provided in Appendix H.

When coding the photographs, the initial approach involved labelling the items in photographs. This was an audit-like approach that did not connect with the richness and depth of the material in the interviews, so it was discontinued. As the photograph captions had a direct relationship with their respective photographs and were initially kept separate, it was natural for them to be brought together in the analysis phase.

As suggested by Rose (2016), an alternative and more suitable approach to coding the photographs was used. It involved grouping recurring places, events, artefacts and other items based on the captions of the photographs for each participant group. Therefore, for each group of participants the captions of their top photographs were recorded, sorted and classified. All captions of the students' photographs are shown in Figure 9.

Student captions grouped:						
Playgrounds	**Big Tree**	**Performance-linked**	**Ovals**	**Garden**	**Library related**	**Nature play**
R-3 playground	Big tree	Performing arts	Bottom oval	Veggie garden	Library	Dug out
Bar	Big tree	Performing arts	Oval	Garden	Library	Tyres
Top playground	Big tree	Drama	Oval	Kitchen garden program	Library	Stepping-stone rocks
Playground	Tree on oval	Electives	Oval (top)	Garden	Library	Stepping-stone rocks
Playground	Tree and beehive	---	Oval (bottom)	Garden	Novels	Shops
Chasey area	Big tree	Stage	Top oval	Lemon trees	New novels	
		Stage			Novels	
Sport related	**Signage/artefacts**	Stage	**Home bases**	**Creatures**		**Safety**
Cricket pitch	Flags	---	Classroom	Chickens	Bench	Cybersafety
Tennis court	Flags	Drums	Door to class	Chickens		Safety
Goal posts	Cross	Drums	Staffroom	Animals	Coop learning	Safety
Soccer ball	School symbol	Microphone	Families			
Sports shed	Big fish				Thirsty area	

Figure 9 - Captions of the grouped student photographs

In bringing the photographs and captions together for the students, staff and parents for further analysis, similarities and differences were illuminated across the participant groups. Examples included significant differences between the student and adult photographs, the uniqueness of some clusters to the students and missing groupings for students. This highlights the importance of including student perspectives when gathering data that has potential to influence them, which is a gap being filled through this research.

Further observations and analyses of photograph captions and their photographs were enabled by playing with the data, spending time with the photographs and their captions, and reflecting on patterns and trends to find emerging themes or practices. The patterns and trends included the similarities and differences between participants' grouped photographs, which contributed to the findings in this research. These are discussed in depth in Chapter Five and are represented by the brown arrows in Figure 8.

Analysing the participant transcripts

In reading the literature, there were several suggestions for analysing transcripts proposed by authors. Yin (2014) highlighted the value of playing with data, looking for patterns, sorting and ordering the data, and using memos to develop strategies and techniques for analysis. Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advocate for the researcher to be organised, systematic and use memos while also being open to potential hunches. They argued that data depth is more significant than data breadth, and encouraged researchers to be aware of the complexity of data analysis. Punch (2014) encouraged the use of tags, codes, labels and indexes when organising data and stated "there is no single, right way to do qualitative data analysis" (p. 169). This notion encouraged me to trial and develop an analysis method unique to the data set.

In selecting a suitable coding method, the conceptual framework for this research (Figure 6) together with the research questions were central. The work of Saldaña (2016) became core reading. It was valuable and comprehensive, and provided descriptions, applications and examples of more than 30 coding techniques for qualitative data, with different methods deemed suitable for specific contexts, data types and locations. Examples of coding techniques included narrative, attribute, concept, emotion and protocol coding methods (Saldaña, 2016).

Coding approaches considered through trials

Utilising the coding work of Saldaña (2016), a shortlist of eight coding methods was generated and then further shortlisted using some criteria. The coding methods needed to:

- encompass multiple data types such as interview transcripts, field notes, documents, artefacts and photographs

- be suitable for an ethnographic case study and

- connect to the artefacts, values, beliefs, assumptions, sayings, doings and relatings of the theoretical framework proposed earlier in this chapter.

The two methods selected for trial were Process Coding and Values Coding.

Process Coding is suitable for studies "that search for the routines and rituals of human life" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 111). Process Coding analyses actions in the data, which connect to the practice architectural sayings, doings and relatings advocated by Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015) and discussed in the conceptual framework.

Values Coding identifies and groups "a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing his or her perspectives or worldview" (Saldaña, 2016, p. 131) as they correlate to the artefacts, values, beliefs and assumptions of the conceptual framework. "Values, attitudes, and beliefs are formed, perpetuated, and changed through social interactions and institutions, and our cultural and religious (if any) memberships" (p. 132). In using this approach to coding, the link to the conceptual framework felt strong, and the values (V), attitudes (A) and beliefs (B) were interconnected and related to the underlying assumptions of culture as proposed by Schein (2010).

In deciding between Process Coding and Values Coding, one transcript was coded using both methods. Further information, including examples of the trial are included in Appendix I. The trials and decisions related to Process or Values Coding were shared, discussed, peer checked, and validated with Higher Degree Research (HDR) colleagues and both research supervisors during a group HDR presentation. The trial illuminated the natural flow in Values Coding and the ease in developing summary codes, as informed by the work of Schein (2010), Schatzki (2005) and Wilkinson & Kemmis (2015) through the

conceptual framework (Figure 6). Participants were not observed engaging in practices while taking their photographs. When talking about their photographs, participants spoke of associated activities, spaces and artefacts used in practices and rituals. It seemed that through the photographs, Values Coding illuminated participants' attitudes, beliefs and values that provided connections between their practices and material arrangements. Process Coding however, felt contrived and did not flow smoothly. The trial experience helped identify Values Coding as the method to use in coding the remaining data.

Coding the transcripts

A total of 28 transcripts was developed from 28 participants: sixteen students, six staff, the principal and five parents. While most students were paired by the school contact person in like year-level and gender groups for PEI, recorded audios enabled individuals to be distinguished. This means that individual student transcripts could be developed and records maintained with demographic data, photographs and captions for each participant.

Researcher perspective during coding

Being intentional in positioning myself from the perspective of each participant was critical in this research when considering others' values, attitudes and beliefs to minimise researcher bias (Boucher, 2017; Holliday, 2016; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Qu & Dumay, 2011). As a reminder of the lens through which the participant considered the task, I re-read the participant's demographic data and reviewed their taken photographs. All the data gathered, including the researcher observations and reflections, were included in the research.

As the researcher and using a constructionist approach when working with the participants, their photographs and the interview transcripts, a reflexive approach was taken when

working with the data during coding, summarising and synthesising (Qu & Dumay, 2011;

Rossman & Rallis, 2003; Stanczak, 2007). Pink (2013) explains:

> A reflexive approach to visual ethnography frees us up to begin to think about the relationality between different processes, persons and things. It invites us to follow the action and the participants, following emotions and stories, rather than trying to control the visual research process by making it systematic. (p. 147)

In working with the data reflexively, I spent time with each transcript to read, stand back,

reflect, consider, summarise and synthesise key concepts. Key themes from the perspective

of the participant were illuminated in this reflexive approach.

The approach taken with Values Coding

The conceptual framework for this research (Figure 6) was visibly prominent through the

coding phase and informed the questions asked through this phase. The process used in

coding each transcript is explained including references to summaries for student 2 (S2)

and parent 4 (P4).

Figure 10 - Cue card for Values Coding

Figure 10 shows a cue card that helped bring consistency to the coding process. The complete transcript was value coded (V) in one colour pen using V_1, V_2, V_3, etcetera, using the blue questions shown in the cue card. The transcript was then attitude coded (A) from A_1, A_2, A_3, etcetera, using the red-coloured prompts in the cue card in a different coloured pen. The third phase of coding recorded the beliefs (B) using B_1, B_2, B_3, etcetera,

from the transcript in a third colour as per the green cue card prompts.

4.15   Developing written paragraph summaries

Key themes and summary VAB phrases

A system was developed to organise and streamline the coding process. After VAB coding, each participant's value, attitude and belief codes were grouped and summarised. Figure 11 provides a summary of these codes for student 2 (S2). The text in blue italics shows seven summary values phrases, two summary attitudes phrases and six summary beliefs phrases. In addition, the VAB key themes for S2 that emerged are in black text in Figure 11.

Key focus *(documented immediately following the interview)*: **PLAYING**

TRANSCRIPTS:

S2 main theme: *PLAYING*

VAB key themes: **PLAYING – ENJOYMENT – CHRISTIAN SCHOOL**

S2 – Values key theme: PLAYING
… running
… activities
… objects
… playing as a group
… drums being played
… playing
… playing

S2 – Attitudes key theme: ENJOYMENT
… enjoyment from activities and objects
… calm and happy

S2 – Beliefs key theme: CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
… we are not to run on the playground
… little towns are less busy than cities
… the school and teachers are nice
… being a Christian school means believing in God
… Lutheran schools believe in God
… every class goes to Worship and Praise Friday mornings

Figure 11 - VAB key themes and summary phrases for S2 (Student 2)

These themes were *playing, enjoyment and Christian school.* The summary VAB phrases together with the coded researcher field notes and interview reflections as they related to each participant, were brought together in a document like the one provided for parent 4

(P4) in Appendix V. In doing so, the textual data for each participant was used to craft written paragraph summaries.

Colour coding like themes

So that written paragraphs could be developed, a colour coding system was used to illuminate like words and phrases to reveal the main themes for each participant. An example of this colour coding system used for parent 4 (P4) is shown in Appendix V, with the written paragraph shown at the bottom.

The intention was to be consistent and develop summary paragraphs like this for all participants. With nuances between some participant groups, perspectives needed adjustment because the paragraph writings did not flow well. This meant the written paragraphs for each group of participants differed slightly. Ideas were shared and discussed with Higher Degree Research (HDR) colleagues and my supervisors, who affirmed my hunches that a slightly different approach was needed.

For each student, I developed a short summary paragraph, a written passage from the student's perspective to capture their highs and lows, and an interpretation from the viewpoint of the researcher. An example of the codes, summary phrases and written paragraphs for student 2 (S2) is found in Appendix J.

Once all staff transcripts were summarised and colour coded, four pieces of writing were developed. They included a succinct paragraph summary, an elaborated summary, a paragraph written from the perspective of the staff member, and the researcher's interpretation of the staff member. Appendix K provides an example of a document with codes and summaries and the four samples of writing for staff member 2 (SM2).

For each parent, two pieces of writing were developed. One was a collective VAB summary of that parent about the school's specialness for them. The second was a parent story that encompassed the circumstances and events leading to some parents choosing this Lutheran primary school for their children. This became the contextual backstory and explained emerging themes and concepts. An example of a parent summary document that includes all codes, summaries and written pieces is found in Appendix L for parent 4 (P4).

Further analysis was needed in bringing all gathered data together, which is expanded upon later in this chapter.

Researcher reflective journal

The researcher reflective journal combined researcher field notes, interview reflections and the personal narrative. These components were coded using Values Coding to identify the values, attitudes and beliefs, which was consistent with the process used for all participant transcripts (Saldaña, 2016). Summary VAB phrases and VAB key themes emerged to capture the main ideas from the experiences and perspectives that emerged from this research, which were further summarised into a written paragraph summary. The key themes and the written paragraph are included in Appendix M, and provide the researcher's overall perspective of the school and its community.

Documents and artefacts

The documents and artefacts were coded using Values Coding to identify the values, attitudes and beliefs. This was consistent with the coding process used with all other data. After coding, summary VAB phrases and VAB key themes were developed. An example of the key themes from the documents and artefacts and the written paragraph summary is found in Appendix N.

Bringing the data together

So that overarching concepts could be identified to help inform the findings of this research, further synthesis was undertaken. Participants' photographs with their associated captions told a story, which contributed to the findings shared in Chapter Five. The VAB key themes for all students, staff, parents, the principal, the researcher reflective journal and documents and artefacts, were combined to illuminate deeper meaning. Further colour coding revealed more dominant themes and sub-themes for this research (Appendix O). This process, explored in depth in Chapter Six, was valuable in developing overarching themes for this research.

Summary written paragraphs generated for each participant were sorted into their respective student, staff, principal or parent groups. By spending considerable time with all the student paragraphs to read, study and play with the words (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), stories and connections surfaced from the themes and writings. The same approach was taken for the staff, parent and principal paragraphs. Visual images developed for each participant group helped illuminate links, connections and relationships (Buzan & Buzan, 2010; Gellert & Cristea, 2013; Prosser, 2007). The images developed for the students and staff are found in Appendix P. They were significant in the development of more comprehensive findings for this research and are shared in Chapter Six.

The researcher reflective journal and the documents and artefacts illuminated VAB key themes and written paragraphs summaries. They were additional yet significant data sources that enriched understandings and the findings developed from PEI (Bowen, 2009; Yin, 2014). Brought together in written paragraph summaries, these contributed to the research findings in Chapter Six.

4.16   Summary of the methodology

The research was a single, ethnographic case study which explored the culture/s of one Lutheran primary school in SA. It investigated various experiences, understandings and feelings of this school's culture from the perspectives of students, staff and parents. In addition, the research considered how students, staff and parents influence and are influenced by the cultural ontology of this school community.

The data was gathered in 2017 over a period of four months from 28 participants directly associated with the school. Of the participants, sixteen were students at the school aged from seven to twelve years of age and twelve were adults. Photo elicitation interviews were the dominant method used and provided substantial data, which included photographs, their captions and the interview transcripts.

Samples of the gathered data with their related coding and summaries, were shared and discussed with my supervisors at regular intervals and with HDR colleagues at professional learning presentations. These experiences deepened my reflections and understandings and helped illuminate the emergent themes for this research.

The findings emerged from two main groups of data. One group included all value, attitude and belief key themes and written paragraphs as developed from their data sources. The data sources included the researcher reflective journal, the documents and artefacts, and each participant's interview transcript. The findings from this group, referred to as 'words and their meanings', are shared in Chapter Six. The findings from the second group are referred to as 'photographs and their stories' and included the photographs with their related captions and participant stories. These are shared in Chapter Five.

5   Photographs and their stories

5.1   What the photographs reveal

This research was a single, ethnographic case study that explored the culture/s of one Lutheran primary school in SA from the perspective of students, staff and parents. Chapter Four explained the research design by describing the methods, data gathered, analysis undertaken and the summaries that revealed the findings, as shown in Figure 12.
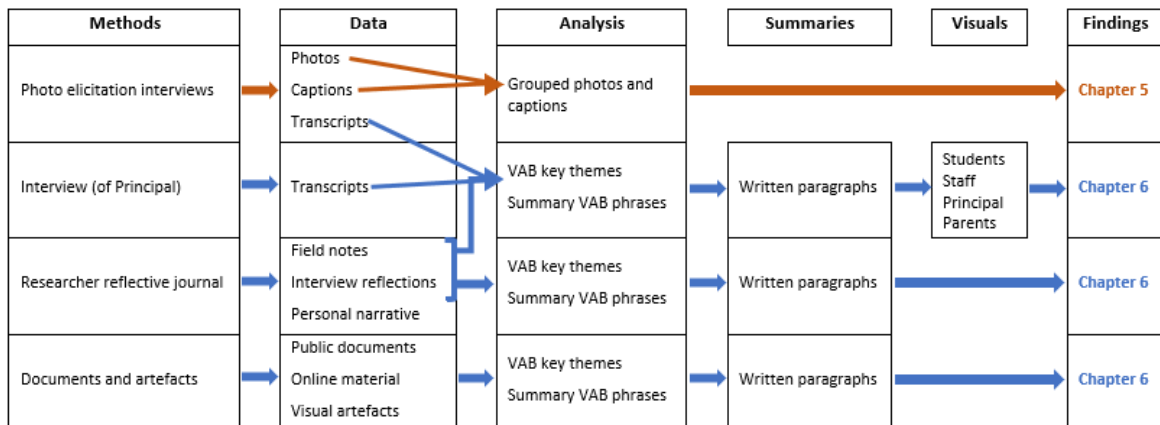
Figure 12 – The flow of Chapters 5 and 6 from methods to the findings

Photo elicitation interviews (PEI) produced a significant amount of data that illuminated rich, diverse perspectives. The main findings from the photographs and captions with related quotes from participant interviews are included in Chapter Five. These are represented by the brown arrows in Figure 12. Photographs and captions with their related quotes helped tell some of the stories that give meaning to specific photographs, and enriched understandings about cultural themes for this research.

Chapter Six presents the findings from the 'words and their meaning' and are represented by the blue arrows in Figure 12. After analysing the value, attitude and belief (VAB) key themes, summary VAB phrases, written paragraphs and accompanying visuals used to

synthesise all textual data, the findings are shared. In combining the summaries and visuals, relationships between the themes were illuminated and shared in Chapter Six. The findings from Chapters Five and Six are brought together to generate inductive understandings of culture/s within the research context. These are presented as discussion in Chapter Seven.

The current chapter begins by outlining the dominant student photographs from the research, followed by the themes that emerged from the student captions with related quotes. The main staff photographs follow with a summary of themes and related staff quotes from captions. Parent photographs are included, with key themes and parent quotes to follow from photograph captions and quotes. Any direct quotes or referenced artefacts or documents from this research are shown in in italics.

The chapter concludes by considering the main findings from the photographs and their stories. The findings include a summary of the main themes, the benefits of PEI, a comparison of photograph similarities and differences for the participants of PEI, and perspectives on success, affordances and practices illuminated through the photographs in this research.

5.2 Photographs from participants

Nearly 300 photographs were taken by the participants and by me as researcher (Table 5 in section 4.13). Participants' photographs were foundational to the stories they shared about unique places and spaces in the school. Pink (2007) explains that when "people use photographs to tell stories about their experiences, identities and practices these images become embedded in personally and culturally specific narratives" (p. 24). Stories may reveal insights, memories and emotions that are not otherwise shared. Through PEI,

participants and especially children, are empowered "to tell their stories and interpret their own culture to the researchers" (Boucher, 2017, p. 15).

Photographs as artefacts, provide a physical representation of culture (Holliday, 2016). In this research, participants had time during the initial photo-taking walk around the school to reflect on their photograph choices and cultural representations. Following this walk and after all photographs had been taken, the interviews to discuss their photographs took place. Participants' interviews of their photographs elicited school and related stories and experiences about activities, events or practices triggered from sharing and talking about their photographs (Clark-Ibanez, 2004; Harper, 2002).

The significance of affordances

I noted that 'affordances' surfaced in some of the findings of this research. The affordance of an environment refers to what it may offer or provide and the possible actions that an observer considers and can take (Bissaker, 2009; Brown et al., 2019; Campbell & Speldewinde, 2020; Chemero, 2003). Gibson (2014) developed the term 'affordance' to explain the potential between an environment's functionality and how it might be used by living creatures such as humans or animals. For example, Gibson (2014) explained that when young children see and explore an object or environment, they consider and experience what the object or environment enables them to do rather than notice its qualities. For children, this is likened to their response to a question such as 'what can you do with that?', which prompts them to explore and experience different ways of learning in relation to the object or environment. Some of the students' experiences in this research illuminated affordances through imaginative play, bartering and creative thinking. References to the potential for an object or environment is referenced several times in this chapter.

5.3   Student photographs and the themes they reveal

Students were asked to take photographs at their school to show what was special for them about their school. The photographs they took included The Big Tree, top oval, bottom oval, the Kitchen Garden and artefacts. While more photographs of the ovals, playgrounds and those related to sports were taken by the male students, female students had an emphasis on the stage or library area, novels and those related to learning. Younger students took more photographs of musical instruments, the stage and nature. While there was a general spread of photos by the older students, there was a slight emphasis on safety and learning. Descriptions and samples of the main student photographs are included in the next section. This is followed by an analysis of the student themes that emerged from the photographs.

The Big Tree

At the edge of the top oval is a dominant, large eucalypt. As researcher, I was unaware of the significance of The Big Tree (Figure 13) until the students took their photographs and shared their reflections.

Figure 13 - Student photographs of The Big Tree

The Big Tree is a large Australian gum over 25 metres high and adjacent to a school boundary fence. Nearly half the students chose to photograph The Big Tree as a valued artefact (Schein, 2010). From my observations, students often sat or played on the grassed area of the tree's base.

Top oval

The top oval in Figure 14 was the largest play space on the school grounds, accommodating over 200 primary school students at one time. This oval had football goals, a cemented basketball keyway and a cricket pitch in the centre. It was bounded by a storage shed, a fence and The Big Tree. Groups of students played games on this oval during recess and lunch breaks. On one occasion, I watched a variety of ball games that involved running, cricket, football, basketball, or soccer with duty staff chatting to students or joining in student games.

Figure 14 - Student photographs of the top oval

Bottom oval

Student captions of these photographs included labels such as the bottom oval, dug out, tyres, stepping- stone rocks and play shops. The bottom oval was the smaller play space on the school grounds. Photographs of the 500 square metre area in Figure 15 show the space had lawn, shrubs, mulched garden beds, seats, citrus trees, plants, rocks, tyres and paved walkways. It was bordered by a fence adjacent to a road intersection, a car park and school buildings, and was away from the busyness of other play areas in the school. Students of mixed ages used this ball-free space in many ways. They valued it as a play area and engaged in chasey, hide and seek, horse-play, obstacle hopping, observing mini beasts, shopping, and sitting and talking.

Figure 15 - Student photographs of the bottom oval

Kitchen Garden

Figure 16 shows student photographs of the Kitchen Garden, or "The Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program" (Stephanie Alexandar Kitchen Garden Foundation, 2021). The photographs included captions that referred to the veggie garden, lemon trees, the garden, chickens, and 'animals' that included local birdlife, as well as the food preparation area. This program helps students develop positive life habits with foods as they learn about gardening, caring for chickens, healthy eating options, food preparation and cooking. Some of these elements are now expanded upon.

Figure 16 - Student photographs of the Kitchen Garden

Gardening

The garden was in a sheltered corner of the school. Students learnt about growing, gardening, harvesting and using seasonal fruit, vegetables and herbs to prepare healthy meals and snacks.

The chickens

Adjacent to the garden area was a chicken coop with several egg-laying chickens (Figure 17). Students were responsible for looking after the chickens, which included feeding and caring for them.

Figure 17 - Student photographs of the chickens

Food preparation

Through the support of staff and adult volunteers, students in Years 4 and 5 learned about healthy eating options, food preparation and cooking. The Year 4 and 5 students valued the experiences of making and eating savoury and sweet dishes such as potato-pumpkin gnocchi, and mandarin and mint muffins.

All student participants shared that the Kitchen Garden Program was special for them. Through this program, some of the student affordances included opportunities to be creative with foods from the refrigerator, socialising over the food preparation bench, and growing life skills through cooking experiences.

Artefacts

Other photographs taken by students but not shown here, were artefacts such as library books for reading, sports equipment, the playground, benches, trees and signs. Schein

(2010) recognised the importance of artefacts when considering culture, as they represent meaning for people or organisations. In the case of the students, these artefacts had meaning which elicited common themes discussed later in this section.

Other places

The places photographed by students included the stage in the large, semi-enclosed Undercroft area, the playgrounds and the library. Student images are not included here for the sake of space and overall size of the thesis. However, like images taken by staff and parents appear in respective sections that follow.

Themes that emerged from the student photographs

A summary of the key themes that emerged through PEI, captions and related quotes and illuminated their stories are provided in Table 6. The themes have been identified from the student perspective as much as possible rather than through an adult lens.

Student photographs	Student main themes
The Big Tree	Agency, freedom to be, memories, protection
Top oval	Agency
Bottom oval	Achievement, agency, freedom to be
Kitchen Garden	Achievement, investment
Artefacts	Achievement, agency, freedom to be
Other places	Achievement, agency, freedom to be

Table 6 - The main themes arising from student PEI

Achievement

The theme of achievement emerged from student photographs of the bottom oval (Figure 15), the Kitchen Garden (Figure 16), the artefacts and other places. On the bottom oval,

students talked about experiences with the tyres, hiding places and playing chasey that gave them a sense of satisfaction and achievement in their play:

> *I also know something. The tyres – the big ones - we hide in them. And that can be good for hide and seek ... it's time to go look at the big tyres ... when we play hide and seek it's easier to hide in the tyres ... you can play a few games in the tyre. (Student 1)*

> *You can play chasey up there; you can play hide-and-seek chasey … every recess and lunch. But the bottom oval is my favourite hide-out. That's my second favourite one: the chasey area … behind that lemon tree has steps up to another place. And you can put all your stuff there. And I always win if I hide there … I hide with my friends there. And we never get caught, because that's the best hiding spot. (Student 10)*

It was important for these students to find good hiding places. It was like a competition for them to outsmart their peers as it gave them personal satisfaction, a sense of achievement and a measure of success. For these students, the sense of achievement and success was like a personal goal or trophy for which they strived.

Students valued the opportunity to experience gardening and to learn new skills by growing produce and trying different food recipes through the Kitchen Garden Program. For some students, the program was an affordance because of the opportunities they had for new experiences:

> *It grows lots of yummy things like parsley and also … plants - and you're allowed to pick bits off of it. Then it tastes like liquorice because it's a liquorice plant – and I like liquorice … we get to go with teachers and meet different teachers … and we do lots of gardening … Because I love gardening and at my other schools we didn't do any gardening. (Student 3)*

Through this program, there was a sense of achievement by students from the new knowledge and skills they gained. One student commented on the life skills they were able to learn through the cooking program:

> *So I like cooking. And it's a good way to share ideas, or in some ways it can express how you feel. Like you can do what-ever you want! There's no rules against what you can and can't cook, or what you can do. Also, if you're doing it at School - like we did – it teaches you a lot of life skills. So - how not to hurt yourself in the oven or pan or the knife, or teaching you a recipe that you've never even had before - like learning cuisines. Like, what we did - we cooked things from different countries and we got to see what they eat and what it's like … It might sound a bit weird, but … when you open the fridge,*

there's all new things in it and you don't know what you're going to cook – so … I have great ideas. And it starts your mind thinking over. (Student 9).

Included in this student's story of cooking, was the potential and opportunity afforded to them to be creative, which provided a sense of success and achievement.

Student photographs of artefacts included the cross and the band instruments. The microphones used in worship, events or public performances represented success through significant achievements. Students shared they were nervous when singing in public, yet felt a strong sense of accomplishment after performances:

I like singing in the microphone … when I go on stage it's nervous – at the end I'm really happy that I did it … sometimes I sing with my friends on stage. (Student 4)

Performing was a challenge for some students, yet an achievement for others. As an affordance (Gibson, 2014; Young et al., 2022), students achieved personal milestones, expressed emotions, worked through nervous moments and grew in confidence through stage performances:

I like the stage because I like performing in front of lots of people … I did my first performance on that stage … I was so happy after I did it. And I just love doing performances since I did that one … my first performance I was scared and I didn't do very good. But then that one, I did really good and I was glad I did it … I toughened out the nervousness and did it. (Student 6)

It was me and 3 other people. And we were doing a dance in front of everybody. And I got really nervous … and I did the performance and I was really proud, and then I got off and I couldn't stop smiling ... I'm normally smiling if I'm really excited to do it, but I was so nervous that I was just shaking and I couldn't do anything ... I was feeling so proud of myself and I just couldn't stop smiling. (Student 7)

Personally, I like Drama and expressing emotions to other people ... you need confidence to get up there and do something. You just want to be the best you can be on stage … it means you care that much ... I feel like – I did it – I could do that again! (Student 8)

The stage area was included in the student photographs of other places. It was special to students because they had opportunities to sing or play in the worship band or perform to an audience, which gave them a strong sense of personal satisfaction and achievement.

Agency

The theme of agency surfaced from the student photographs of the Big Tree (Figure 13), the top oval (Figure 14), the bottom oval (Figure 15), the artefacts and other places. Students had freedom and agency in their play breaks through the roles and capacities in which they chose to engage (Prompona et al., 2020; Quaglia & Fox, 2018). Apart from the playground areas where there were year level restrictions for safety reasons, male and female students of all ages were free to choose what to do, who to play with, where, when and how to play. Students negotiated the rules and consequences of their play, and had freedom to play where they would feel energetic and happy (Sime et al., 2021; Waermo, 2016). While some students chose to play near to and around The Big Tree, others chose to engage in activities and play on the top oval:

> *I like running on the oval … I just enjoy running. I don't think there's a particular reason … I really enjoy playing sport, cricket, soccer, softball, running, just all of them. (Student 2)*
>
> *Oh, I like the oval because I play soccer on it … we can play soccer; we can play footy there. And those are my favourite sports. And you can play chasey up there; you can play hide-and-seek chasey. (Student 10)*
>
> *because you're on the oval all of the time, playing football and stuff like that … they'll know how to do everything and they'll just run freely across the oval, hardly getting in trouble … and play with balls and they just have a free life! (Student 13)*
>
> *Soccer, football … basketball … if we didn't have an oval, I wouldn't even practise for my dream and I wouldn't get to do stuff that I want to. (Student 14)*

These comments were like those from the students about their experiences of The Big Tree. Students were free to develop respect between peers where they socially interacted and grew friendships with them. These findings are consistent with research by Prompona et al. (2020), which found there was value for children in play during breaks because they exercised agency and developed social interactions with peers. It is worth noting that the agency experienced by students happens through the informal curriculum. Student agency

was outside of the classroom through their choice of activities and associated learning during play breaks (Milner, 2010; Sharma-Brymer et al., 2018; Sime et al., 2021).

The bottom oval area was another space where students were free to be creative in their games, activities and play. It was an open and safe area that accommodated multiple groups of students. Students had choice and agency in their play and activities in this area. Part of the bottom oval area included a shopping or market space, which I found interesting to observe. At the beginning of play breaks, students raced to the bottom oval to find their hidden wares of leaves, sticks, twigs, flowers and rocks, which they used to set up their trading stalls. They had *agency* in their play and were creative in setting up activities. Students enjoyed the trading, bartering, chats and browsing of others' shops:

> *I enjoy going to them, buying some things they have with red rocks ... It's fun – to set up things. It feels like you're in a little town … there's lots of people there, and you can do the shop and set up with them, and then you can make a shop and spend time with them. (Student 2)*

Students played games and re-enacted real-life experiences such as shopping, bartering and investing. One student gave detailed information about the buying, selling and benefits of shop trading, its enduring nature and the potential for students to work collectively as a community:

> *I've got lots of red rocks, so it's so fun because you can trade stuff there. You can buy stuff and you can sell stuff. Everyone has their own shop, and you can like trade things – red rocks are like money … I hide my red rocks – my shop is in the "chasey" area. I play with my friends there. It started when I was in Year 1 ... The same people sometimes always come. And they can sell the shop and they get SO many red rocks! … some people can have like five shops. And they don't have that much money. But they will probably sell and then they'll get so much money. They buy like all the things like there's rocks and crystals and all that … No-one stops playing that game ... you can buy stuff and sell stuff. And you get your own house when you buy. And mine was SO expensive! Because, mine's probably the biggest house there … Me and my friends … We buy it with my friends and we're all on the same team. And we keep all our red rocks there. (Student 10)*

In having access to materials in the natural environment, students were afforded opportunities and experiences to be resourceful, and extend their skills and capabilities

(Sime et al., 2021). Research by Sharma-Brymer et al. (2018) indicated that "in interacting with nature to use these affordances, children demonstrate a high level of social interactions, cooperation, autonomy, team work, empathy and collaboration" (p. 177). These were the experiences of students in the bottom oval area.

Although these learning experiences and interactions were informal for the children, they were highly valued. Students developed skills and were afforded life-like experiences through their choice and agency in play (Mockler & Groundwater-Smith, 2015; Sime et al., 2021). Again, this was another example of the informal curriculum in action outside of the classroom.

Students had some degree of agency through the Kitchen Garden Program. They could be creative, learn new cooking skills and found success in experiences such as caring for the chickens:

> *There's two jobs. We call them sustainable jobs - there's the compost and the chickens … after lunch, every day, some people go out and check the eggs from the chickens, check the chickens, change their water and food and stuff. (Student 11)*

For some students, the chickens were a favourite and referred to as pets. They developed emotional connections with the chickens and saw them as happy:

> *It's kind of like a school pet – it's not like your lizard; it's like, you have them there and you get eggs. If you're feeling sad then you can go to the chickens, because chickens are never sad. (Student 5).*

> *Yeh – our school chickens are always happy. (Student 7).*

Student photographs of the artefacts and other places such as the playgrounds, represented the choice and agency they had during their play breaks.

Some students identified the playground area or artefacts in the playground such as the swings and bars, as being special for them. These artefacts were affordances for them (Gibson, 2014; Young et al., 2022) because they gave students freedom and agency in their

activity choices. As affordances, different items of playground equipment provided the children with opportunities to make up new games to play, experience gymnastic exercises and climbing tricks, and be creative and inventive in free play (Khan, 2020; Malone & Tranter, 2003).

Freedom to be

For the students, this theme emerged from The Big Tree (Figure 13), the bottom oval (Figure 15), the artefacts and other places. While The Big Tree was an area for students to sit, reflect and be, there was a specialness about The Big Tree that included its age, its potential for a variety of activities and its enduring existence*:*

> *It's special because it's very old. It's been there nearly since the school has started. (Student 6)*
>
> *The Big Tree is special because it's somewhere you can play and sometimes you can climb up it. And it's in a big area so you can do a lot of things around it ... You can play hide and seek and chasey and a lot of those sort of games … it's really fun to play around a big space like that with a big tree in the middle. (Student 7)*
>
> *The Big Tree was my favourite … when I was little … I saw that Big Tree. And I ran over to it to have a look at it. It was quite admiring. So for the years growing up, I've loved playing around that tree and doing things. (Student 13)*

The Big Tree seemed to facilitate a range of activities and ways of being without judgement or restriction, which made it a positive place for students to be. The sense and feelings of students that they had 'freedom to be' was dominant in relation to The Big Tree. Students felt calm, relaxed, protected, settled, and secure in the environment around The Big Tree and took time to reflect in solitude.

> *It's special to me … when my friends are being mean or a bit selfish … I like to go and just relax and think about all the positive and good stuff about life. It's just relaxing under that tree. It's very big. (Student 15)*
>
> *I just feel relaxed … usually I just go up there when I want some alone time ... I like to just go up to that tree and pretend that it's my best friend and just play with it, just sit with it. I feel happy, relaxed. (Student 16)*

While students shared a strong appreciation for having freedom to be around The Big Tree, similar perspectives were shared by them in relation to the bottom oval which was located

some distance away from The Big Tree. Students valued the opportunity to be creative, free, and to just 'be' as they chose in the vicinity of the bottom oval:

> *The dugout … you're being free and you've got a lot of space. (Student 6)*
>
> *I think the bottom oval is a lovely place in the school, because there's trees, there's lovely benches to sit on, there's shade, there's rocks, animals – it's just like a lovely wildlife place in the school ... I like just looking at the sky and watching the clouds and just lying on the grass with my friends … I think it's relaxing just jumping on different rocks and just enjoying the bottom oval as it is … and feel really calm and yeah rejoiced. (Student 16)*
>
> *And, there's a tree, right there. It's a bit shaped like a chair and you can sort of sit in it. And I remember sitting in it for the whole of recess and no one told me off and it was the best recess ever. (Student 16)*

On the bottom oval, students had freedom in their play and to be as they chose during breaks on school grounds. They were calm, and valued having freedom and choice in their activities. For some students this included sitting in groups with friends to casually chat, which made it a nice, relaxing place to be.

Of the artefacts and places photographed by students, the library was a place of comfort and belonging. Students relaxed in this environment and shared that they felt at home, safe and secure, calm and peaceful and free to be in a state of solitude.

Investment

Students enjoyed the exposure they were given for the various roles and responsibilities associated with caring for the garden (Figure 16) and the chickens (Figure 17). These experiences and responsibilities as investments in their futures, enabled them to develop knowledge, skills, and respect for the workload and commitment necessary to undertake these tasks. Students recognised these experiences were valuable for their future:

> *I think that when people come to the school … they come out with more respect for things. They come out more responsible. And they come out, like respectful. (Student 12)*

Memories

The memories shared by students of conversations related to The Big Tree (Figure 13) were significant. One student recalled a conversation with a teacher who was previously a student at this school:

> *[Teacher] came to the school when s/he was a kid and s/he said it was there, and it was a seedling when s/he was here. (Student 6)*

A different student shared a memory about their parent and the same tree:

> *my Dad came here and I think he said that there was a tree growing in the corner of the oval … so it's been here a long time. (Student 7)*

The Big Tree triggered memories related to adult conversations about this artefact, as special points of connection for these students to their school in the past. The memories gave students a sense of comfort, familiarity, and a connection with people they knew who had shared stories about The Big Tree and affirmed its specialness for them.

Protection

Two students referred to the aesthetic nature and space of the school grounds. For some students, The Big Tree (Figure 13) afforded a sense of protection and security which was shared using analogies between the large trees, God, protection and being safe:

> *There's lots of branches … every branch is like a positive moment in your life … say one of the branches … like that big branch in the middle actually represents my family, and then the bird is just like God protecting over my family and then all the little bits are all the good moments. (Student 15)*

> *I like going there … looking at the sky and watching the clouds and just lying on the grass with my friends … and feel really calm and yeah rejoiced. (Student 16)*

Student 15's reflections as a nine-year-old child were powerful and quite profound. This student made connections between life scenarios and the tree, its branches and positive moments. By connecting the tree, the bird and their family to God, deep perspectives related to Christianity through environmental artefacts were elicited, which included a reference to the protective nature of God.

5.4   Staff photographs and the themes they reveal

Staff took photographs at the school to show what was special for them about their school.

The photographs they took included gathering places, artefacts and a collection of other

photographs, but did not reveal notable differences according to gender or age.

Descriptions and samples of the main staff photographs are included in the next section.

This is followed by an analysis of the staff themes that emerged from the photographs.

Gathering places

The photographs of indoor gathering places special for the staff (Figure 18) included the

staffroom, the classroom and the Undercroft.
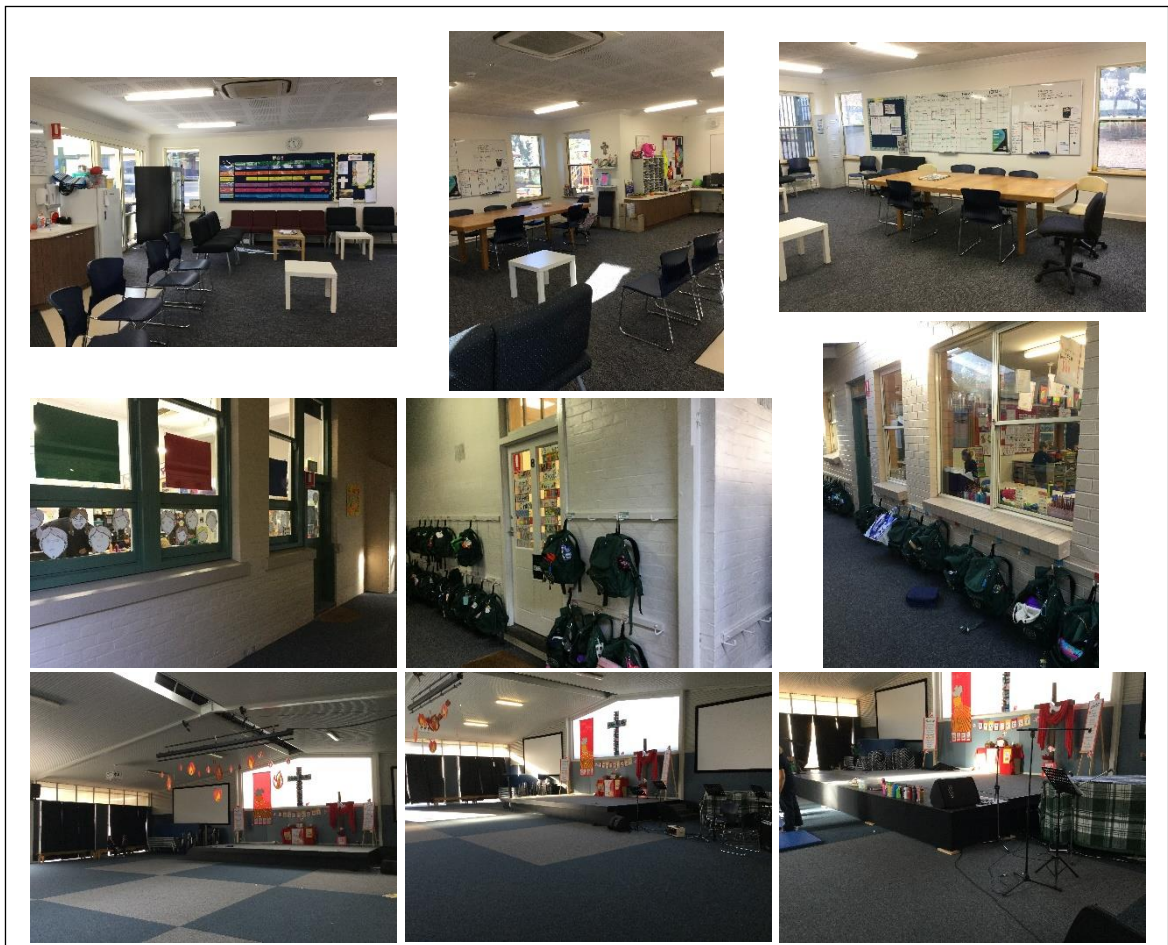
Figure 18 - Staff photographs of gathering places

The staffroom, as the home base for teachers, leaders and non-teaching staff was the space where staff met each morning, during teaching breaks and after school. Some staff photographed the outside of their classroom as a place special to them to represent the teaching space where significant time was spent with students each week. While representative of the inside of the classroom, the outside photographs decreased potential risks of student identification. Half the staff participants photographed the Undercroft area. This was a large, semi-enclosed space in the centre of the school and surrounded by classrooms and walkways. It was a meeting area for students and teachers, and used as a multi-purpose space for worship, assemblies, music practice, drama, singing or physical education.

Artefacts

Staff photographs of artefacts (Figure 19) included captions that referred to a framed Indigenous board with artwork, Indigenous poles, the cross in a circle, school badge, plaques, engraved pavers, and the school vision and mission statements. These artefacts were special to the staff as illuminated through the themes of connected community, investment, and traditions and heritage.

Other photographs

There were two additional groups of photographs taken by the staff in this school, which are shown in Figure 20. These groups were either related to the jobs or roles that staff held at the school, or to the school's signage, and entry and exit areas.

Figure 19 – Staff photographs of artefacts
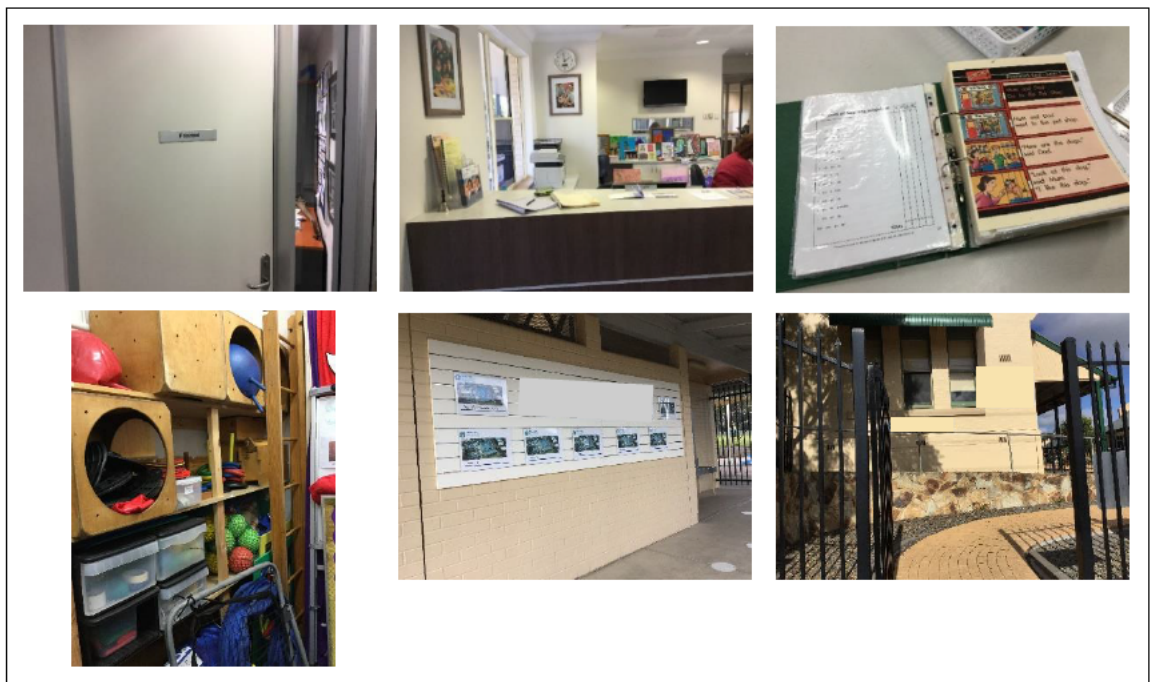
Figure 20 - Other staff photographs

Staff themes

In the section that follows, the themes that emerged through staff PEI as shown in Table 7

are considered, with quotes to elicit stories from the photographs.

Staff photographs	Staff main themes
Gathering places	Connected community, investment
Artefacts	Connected community, investment, traditions and heritage
Other photographs	Belonging, vocation

Table 7 - Themes from the staff photographs

Agency

While agency did not emerge as a main theme for staff, one staff member recognised the Kitchen Garden Program as an opportunity for students to work with volunteers and staff. Through the preparation and cooking of food, students had a degree of agency in choosing which ingredients to use for some recipes.

Belonging

Other photographs by staff showed signs and school entry areas where first impressions of this school were formed. Three staff spoke of the welcoming nature of people at this school towards staff, families and school community members. While Maslow (1962) and Allen et al. (2022) refer to belonging as a basic human need, Hope (2012) explained that a strong sense of belonging, acceptance and feeling welcome was likened to being home or part of a family. The welcoming approach of people at this school helped staff feel a sense of belonging and homeliness that was special for them.

Connected community

The staffroom was a special gathering place*,* where collegial relationships and their associated connections were nurtured. Staff spoke positively about staff relationships, collegiality and shared emotions:

> *This is where most of our interactions take place … This is the hub for staff, where we meet, where we can debrief, where our staff meetings happen, where a lot of those*

decision-making processes in staff meetings happen … this is really the core meeting place, where we come back for a break… there's been tears, laughter, there's been everything in that room … there's not a lot of negativity … If you can walk into that room with a happy well-being, you're confident in what you're doing and you're feeling good in yourself then that carries through to the kids … it all really stems from the staff and ourselves being in a happy place, and loving the school and loving to be here. That'll carry through to the families and the kids. (Staff member 1)

In the staff room … that is where staff have lunch, talk about things and have devotion in the morning … We're all included and that's a special time for us in the morning … that connection and being able to say good morning to people … It's powerful to be praying in groups and making those connections … So I find that fundamental to the way our school operates. (Staff member 3)

The staffroom was the place where the staff group became a connected community as they greeted and interacted, engaged in regular devotional practices, and spent recess and lunch breaks. It had a positive team feel that was collegial, binding and supportive for staff. From the staffroom, this flowed to the students and families in the school.

While the staffroom was the heart and home base for staff, the Undercroft was the heart and home base for the whole school. It was another gathering place where people welcomed and interacted with each other, developed relationships and socially connected as community. Worship, assembly and other practices were held in the Undercroft and brought the school community together as one central body:

I see this as the heart of the school … there's parents all around a lot and already younger kids becoming involved in the community. I think the kids here see that and it just makes them feel that it's … like a home away from home. Their parents are happy here, they see them involved, they see them interacting with us which makes them accept us better. (Staff member 1)

this is where we have our worship and assembly … seeing parents come … the connections that they then make with each other and that community that's built, and the fact that they have tea and coffee - that's at the heart of connections being made. (Staff member 3)

It's a meeting place … the heart of where things happen in the school. (Staff member 4)

Staff photographs of artefacts were representative of the school as a connected community. They valued the school's shared community vision, and its reputation as a connected and caring Christian school:

> *We all need to be on board - we need to have a shared vision … it sends a very strong message to the community, that hey – this is what we're about, you're involved in it just as much as us - and I think that that marries up with all the other things we do to involve the community … we really do try to get connected … it's not just about being local, global … but being all connected. (Staff member 1)*

> *[Our mission statement] ... the cross - being a Lutheran school … means that we value God; the Christian element is part of our school and part of our learning. Here we learn about God and it's part of what we do and what we value. It's in our Christian Studies and our worship and is an important integral part of our curriculum here … love heart that promotes the caring factor. (Staff member 2)*

Some staff felt a sense of honour in being associated with this school community. One staff member spoke about their connection to this school through their staff badge:

> *It's symbolic that I'm part of this school. I'm a teacher here … I know that I'm connected to this place and this is where I work … I'm proud of this school and what it stands for and what we do. (Staff member 1)*

One staff member spoke passionately about the Kitchen Garden Program and noted that it gave opportunities for parent volunteers to connect with others, build relationships and that people grew as community by working towards a common purpose:

> *The program philosophy is pleasurable food education but it is also meant to be a family kitchen that you all cook in … a lot of parents come in and help. The community that's built with parents through that is fantastic … it's great to see those connections (Staff member 3)*

Investment

Staff reflected on their classroom as a gathering place. They were deeply passionate about their work and the connections made with their students. Staff used their gifts and talents in their vocations (Bartsch, 2013; Scholes, 2010; Veith, 2011), and found this personally rewarding and energising. They recognised that their work with the students made a positive difference, described as an investment in the students socially, academically and relationally:

> *That's where I do what I love in that room and it's where I have my best moments. It's where I help my kids to learn and to grow and to develop and have personal milestones … That's where it all happens; I'm connected to the classroom in that way really – where I can see my kids every day and where I can do what I love and see it impacting my students … I enjoy helping their development, social interactions and learning … I*

really enjoy working with them through those things … We do everything under the watchful eye of God and as a Christian family. (Staff member 1)

That's my classroom. That's special to me because it's where I am every day, and that's why I'm here and that's my passion. Your role is your students, so that's the most special thing to me and that's why I'm here … make it welcoming, space for the kids, brighten it up and have them be part of your environment. You spend all day, every day in there so you have to make it a nice place to be … it's the classroom … they're part of the rules, the jobs they choose, the seating, the tables, making it their own. (Staff member 2)

While only two staff took photographs of their classroom, some other staff were not classroom teachers, so they did not have a main classroom or base to photograph. Instead, these staff had responsibility for specialised programs that occurred across multiple rooms in the school. The photographs of artefacts enabled the theme of investment to surface. It represented the time and commitment staff put into their role at the school for professional programs that would benefit the students with whom they worked.

Traditions and heritage

Artefacts had meaning and provided participants with a connection to the historical traditions and rituals of this school. Artefacts represent the school's values and beliefs. For example, the cross as a cultural artefact in this school symbolises the connection to and belief in God and represents the school's Christian tradition and heritage. This artefact, together with the embedded Christian practices of devotion and prayer, were communal, binding traditions reflective of the school's values and beliefs in this school.

One staff member took photographs of Indigenous artefacts to represent cultural inclusivity. They reminded people of the local Indigenous stories and heritage:

the whole inclusiveness of Indigenous culture or other cultures … In terms of Indigenous … [Australia has the] welcome, thank you for the land that we're standing on, those acknowledgements. (Staff member 6).

Another staff member photographed artefacts with signs and words on plaques and pavers and referred to them as missional statements. These artefacts were significant and held

deep meaning for the community (Abawi, 2013; Deal & Peterson, 2016; Hall, 2013). Some represented God's Word through Bible passages, while others included names of prominent visionaries for this school. The cross reminded people of the saving work of Jesus Christ which was explained in detail in Chapter Two. This is the staff member's story of scripture and the cross:

> *The pre-eminence of scripture in a Lutheran school ... it's central ... things may change but we're scripturally bound ... If you go to any Lutheran institution, there's a missional statement somewhere. And even the pavers – they're missional statements ... God is a conscious being that's being addressed and everything else serves ... I've walked along this path many times and looked at the names ... as an epitaph, it's better than a cemetery. (Staff member 5)*

> *It's a cross inside a circle and I think of our Father, I think of the theology of the cross. There's a book called 'The Theology of the Cross' that pastor got me to read; it talks about the natural law, and the law that convicts us of sin, and the law that points us to grace ... It's a good symbol and it's a good community place. I've used it with many, many students ... the theology ... that I've really inculcated into my own faith is the idea that the cross is the be-all and end-all. You can't do anything to earn your salvation – it's a gift, so that's the symbol of it. (Staff member 5)*

These reflections were significant. While the artefacts held deep meaning that represented this school's history and story, they were biblically connected mission statements. As shared in Chapter Two and by this staff member, God's Word underpins the history of Lutheran schools. In this research, God's Word was represented through the artefacts, traditions, and Christian rituals and practices of this school that are foundational to this school's existence.

Vocation

The group of other photographs represented the roles that staff held in the school. These roles included formal leadership positions and roles with responsibilities for student programs. As referenced by Veith (2011) and Bartsch (2013) in Chapter Two, there were perspectives that related to staff being valued in their roles and feeling they had found their calling or *vocation* within this school:

It's the things I do – the Senior Unit one. That's where my biggest passion is - working with the older kids. That was my area of training. (Staff Member 6)

5.5   Parent photographs and the themes they reveal

Parents took photographs at the school to show what was special for them about their school. The photographs they took included the Undercroft, playground and a collection of other photographs, but did not reveal notable differences according to gender or age. Descriptions and samples of the main parent photographs follow, including an analysis of the emergent parent themes.

Undercroft

Most parents took photographs of the Undercroft, which were very similar to the photographs taken by staff in Figure 18. Parents knew that the Undercroft was used for assemblies and Friday school worship led by key people on the stage, so it was a special place for them in the school.

Playground

Three parents identified the playground near the school's main entry (Figure 21) as special for them, as it was a natural gathering area. Before and after school, children and younger siblings played on the equipment under parent supervision, while parents socialised nearby.

Other photographs

Other photographs taken by parents included events and items related to their voluntary work in the school (Figure 22). Events included sports days and an Easter fun afternoon. Voluntary work included listening to children read in the mornings, providing meals, giving time towards the Carer's Program or helping in the Kitchen Garden Program.

Figure 21 - Parent photographs of the playground area
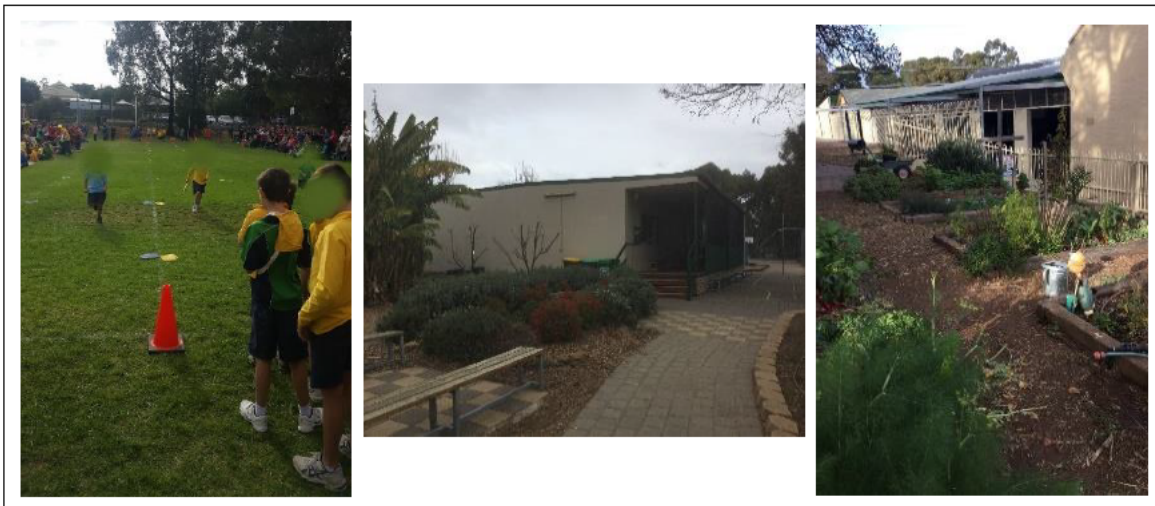
Figure 22 - Other parent photographs

Parent themes

The themes that surfaced from the parent photographs (Table 8) are now considered.

Parent photographs	Parent main themes
Undercroft	Achievement, Christianity, community, traditions.
Playground	Belonging, community.
Other photographs	Connections, investment

Table 8 - A summary of the parent themes

Achievement

Parents recognised the stage in the Undercroft as a place where their children participated in public performances. Children had permission to try new experiences, develop personal confidence, and experience a sense of achievement. Parents were proud and very happy to see their children performing on stage as they spoke, sang, danced or performed in dramas:

> *The children get up and perform on stage … assemblies … worship and praise … the children get up there and host or participate in some way. They've done performances up there with dance and choir … They've both gotten up on stage and presentations too through worship and praise or assembly … it's an important part. (Parent 3)*

> *As a parent … you're proud when you see your kid on the stage. And the school does a pretty good job … getting the kids involved … every child gets a turn on the stage and every child gets a turn on the microphone … It's good for the kids … to just be involved … it teaches them to be confident … trying new things. And being up on the stage and having belief in yourself and a bit of confidence that you can do things. (Parent 5)*

Belonging

The playground area gave adults and children opportunities to connect. Parents and guardians felt welcomed and accepted and developed a sense of belonging through the social relationships they developed. Some parents took photographs of artefacts that represented familiar and recurring practices, which were connected to significant traditions that held personal and sentimental value for them. The artefacts showed that parents felt at home and comfortable in this school, giving them a sense of belonging that was family-like.

Christianity

As parents spoke about the Undercroft, they reflected on the type of Christianity they experienced in the school. It seemed to have an invitational nature that was not intimidating for people. Christianity was noticeable but subtle, inclusive yet non-threatening, and respected yet accepted by people. Students and parents determined their level of acceptance and engagement:

I don't feel … pressure to join in … you're coming to a school where there's Christianity being taught … that will be a part of what they're learning … you already know what you're going to get. It's whether you embrace it … If your kids embrace it, that's really good. (Parent 1)

Community

The Undercroft was a gathering place where people welcomed and connected with each other and experienced this school as community. Parents chose to intentionally walk through the Undercroft so they could connect with others, as shared by this parent:

That's where … I feel more a sense of community with the school. That's where a lot of people will hang out at pick up and drop off even if they drop off kids in other parts of the school, people still tend to walk through there or past there and say 'hi' to other people … a lot of mums get to catch up and chat, and mix and have a casual chat with teachers; and kids get to play together. It's just a nice community area … it's probably the main hub of the school. (Parent 3)

In the playground area, parents saw adults and students openly welcoming each other. They had opportunities to talk, connect, develop long-term friendships, and grow a supportive community network with other parents:

And you see kids high-fiving everyone in the morning … see the interaction between the little ones … as soon as our kids come in … someone will come along from the playground, pick 'em up and go, 'Come on, what are we doing today?' So it's a really happy school. (Parent 1)

It's a good opportunity for them to play and have fun … if there're other parents there, then I get to talk to other parents as well, so it's good for all of us. (Parent 2)

I spend a lot of time here ... after school ... It's where I've made new friends. It's where I've gotten to know a lot of other mums, and a lot of other kids. It's been a place where my children have also made friends … it's also a place to have a quick chat and 'hi' to teachers coming and going - morning and afternoon. So I guess it's a place where people congregate … One of my best friends, actually, I met in the playground … So it's just such a lovely community, and such friendly people, and everyone has a real interest in making the school work and making the community work. Having people get along, being friendly, kind and supportive to each other. (Parent 3)

Connections

Parents referred to school organised events during PEI that were included in their other photographs. Events such as school, social, and community functions were opportunities

for people to establish connections and nurture relationships with others. For example, children participated in events such as sports days or fun afternoons where families attended as spectators or volunteers. These events created a forum for families to see their children or grandchildren in action, while also providing opportunities for families to build connections and deepen relationships with other families.

Investment

Represented mostly through the other photographs taken by parents, parent volunteers in the school were active and recognised. They gave time, skills or expertise to help others in need:

> *They've got such a wonderful lot of volunteers. People are involved because they really want to be. (Parent 3)*
>
> *Because I've been here a while though, so they definitely know – because I'm a volunteer – so they get to know you and your family … we're always around the place. So I think you just get to know people and know families. (Parent 5)*

The volunteer and carer programs generated a respectful, unconditional, and willing desire for parents to invest personal resources to serve others in need. While their time, skills, support, or expertise were an investment in others in the school community, there were new perspectives shared in relation to photographs taken by some parents of the Kitchen Garden. It was interesting to learn that as parents volunteered their time in the Kitchen Garden Program, they too gained knowledge and skills for themselves to use at home with their families. Unintentionally through the volunteer program, this was an investment by the school that helped parents and their families at home. Parents shared these experiences:

> *The Kitchen … has been the most special for me. The kids … learnt the skills to cook and help me to cook at home, but I've even learnt new things as well … I learnt how to make pasta for the first time. So they make pasta from scratch, gnocchi, flat bread, curries. (Parent 2)*
>
> *The school … got me really started on the volunteer side of things … I actually … learnt some things myself – like out in the garden … And honestly I just learnt so much by the*

teachers helping the parents … that opened the door to a lot of things. And we've done a lot of things in our own yard because I came up and helped out for a half hour. (Parent 5)

Helping other people in this capacity opened doors for support, new friendships, and community connections for those receiving assistance, with reciprocal and incidental benefits for those who served. The carer services enabled volunteer parents to look out for families who might potentially benefit from extra professional support:

Reading in the mornings … It's sort of our 'touchstone' with the parents, to make sure, 'Is everyone looking all right? Are you doing OK?' … when someone's going through a hard time … if the parents are okay, then the kids are usually okay … we're kind of the eyes and ears on the ground making sure that everyone's alright as well. And they are for us … because people care … reading in the mornings gives opportunities to touch base and make sure everyone's going okay. Even the teachers … I'm in the Carer's Group … if someone's hurting, we will go and help them until they're back on their feet. So there's that real sense of community and Christian caring within that, and helping one another. (Parent 1)

Memories

Most parent took photographs of artefacts that became prompts during the interviews. Items such as a sign from a Kindergarten and Mother's Day bags, prompted memories for parents. While some memories triggered emotional experiences about their child, others signified the repetition of history through their own child.

Traditions

The stage in the Undercroft was the central focal area for the practice of weekly Christian worship. The worship tradition consisted of Bible readings, a Christian message, prayer time, and a live student and staff band to lead worship songs. Parents spoke of the energy and singing experienced through worship, and the acceptance of people to participate:

Friday with worship … you'll see all the kids getting into it. The songs come up, they're up – they've got the actions … everyone's … feeling it … And they're Christian-based, the teachings for the services … quite often we'll just stand there and dance … other people … they kind of get into the groove … I just see them toe-tapping and sitting there and looking around and going … 'Oh this is alright. It's not gonna hurt me. (Parent 1)

Every Friday they have worship and praise as a school … singers out the front, and there's usually a teacher or two singing … [principal] plays the guitar. [Teacher] plays the keyboard or piano. Other students play various instruments. (Parent 2)

There is a weekly worship and praise … I do like to stay for that one … (Parent 4)

Parents recognised school assembly as another traditional and cultural event. In assembly, students shared their learning, and achievements and successes were recognised and acknowledged:

That area is used for other sort of celebrations … creativity and the range of experiences that kids have … And even celebrating achievements … whether it's academic, or musical, or sporting achievements or just birthdays … But that space is always very much a place of celebration. (Parent 4)

Other whole school events held in the Undercroft included concerts and community fundraisers. Parents recognised these as opportunities for celebrations and community connections:

They try and hold the fundraising events or they do it for the simple fact of branching out to the community. (Parent 2)

That's where events are held … We had our Cabaret only 2 weeks ago … We go every year - it's fantastic, just seeing all the people there … Everyone was together. It's a casual evening so everyone was having fun and enjoying themselves. (Parent 3)

People associated with the school felt welcomed and included at these events. They were often able to connect, share with each other and celebrate student achievements.

5.6 Findings from the photographs and their stories

Findings from the student, staff and parent photographs, and their captions and related stories revealed main themes and other points to note, which are now considered.

Main themes

Table 9 provides a summary of the main themes that emerged from the photographs and their stories of the students, staff and parents. Differing perspectives discussed in this chapter have been added to the table in the groups to which they relate. Discussion on additional findings through PEI and from the analysis of research data follow.

Photographs	Students	Staff	Parents
The Big Tree	Agency Freedom to be Memories Protection	-	-
Top oval	Agency	-	-
Bottom oval	Achievement Agency Freedom to be	-	-
Kitchen Garden	Achievement Investment	Agency Community Skills	Investment Skills and success
Gathering places *(includes the Undercroft and playground)*	Achievement Agency Freedom to be	Connected community Investment	Achievement Belonging Christianity Community Traditions
Artefacts	Achievement Agency Freedom to be	Connected community Investment Traditions and heritage	Belonging Investment Memories
Other photographs: *(roles, signage, entries, events)*	-	Belonging Vocation	Belonging Community Connections Investment

Table 9 - Themes from the photographs and their stories

PEI method

As a research method, PEI enabled seven to twelve-year-old primary school students to freely and openly share their cultural perspectives and experiences related to their school. This was different to relying on the traditional adult understandings of school culture on behalf of the students.

In bringing together the photographs, their captions and related quotes from the photo elicitation transcripts, similarities and differences between participant groups were illuminated to provide deeper meaning of the findings from this research.

Photograph similarities for the participants

All participants took photographs of artefacts, the Kitchen Garden and various aspects related to gathering places that represented the variety of themes shown in Table 9. While participants in this research did not take photographs of people due to ethics, they understood that faces would be covered to de-identify them if they did appear in photographs. It is significant that all participants regularly referred to people in the interviews and spoke about relationships, belonging and the school as a connected community. It points to the importance of socialisation that happens when people meet, connect and develop relationships through the school community (Eaude, 2019; Glover & Coleman, 2005; Sergiovannni, 1994).

Photograph differences for the participants

Different perspectives on photographs were shared between the students and adults. Adults took photographs of indoor places or spaces that were special for them at this school, that mostly included gathering places. In contrast, I was surprised that classroom photographs were not a main feature for the students, with less than 2% of student photographs being of their classroom. Student photographs showed outdoor areas such as the garden and the ovals, where they had choice and freedom attributed to agency through their play and activities (Kostenius, 2011; Promopona et al., 2020). Rasmussen (2014) suggested this perception of freedom was a feature of PEI as a method with children because of its contrast with school life that was "often strictly bound by rules" (p. 19). While in agreeance with this suggestion, the freedom, choice and agency expressed by students was tied to specific artefacts, experiences and activities in key places in the school. In the outdoor areas, students had power and control over their learning, the experiences in

which they wanted to engage and with whom they would socialise. This provided more depth and insight than the freedom suggested by Rasmussen.

The photographs that students took of artefacts in the school illuminated different themes to those of the adults. Parent photographs of artefacts illuminated the themes of memories and belonging. They shared stories that elicited experiences that were personal and significant for them emotionally and relationally, that triggered positive life-changing events for their families. In contrast, student photographs of artefacts were mainly of those found in the Undercroft and elicited the themes of achievement, agency and the freedom to be. Students were afforded opportunities to explore, develop and showcase their skills and talents through events in the Undercroft. While students were personally satisfied through their sense of achievement, they had opportunities to develop new skills and talents that had potential to be valuable for their lives outside of school.

The adults did not reference The Big Tree at all during this research and provided little recognition of the top oval. Despite the top oval being a hive of student activity, social interactions and noise during play breaks, there was little reference to the top oval by the adults. While two staff noted that the top oval was a place where events happened or students could be found, parents did not refer to the top oval. I suggest this is because they are mostly present at the school at the start and end of the school day and do not encounter the activities of the children during their play breaks.

In relation to the bottom oval, three staff mentioned the nature play space. One recognised the value of play, creative play and trading games in which the students were immersed. A parent knew the bottom oval as the nature area and spoke of a signpost named with international countries, rather than the investigative play in which children were engaged.

While these adults identified the bottom oval as an area that was special, their insights were minimal when compared to those of the students. As discussed earlier, the students recognised various affordances for learning, creativity and socialisation through their creative nature play.

The examples shared highlight the importance of including the perspectives of students in research of this nature because their perspectives surfaced in different ways than for the adults. This finding is a major outcome of this research.

Perspectives on success

Perspectives of success were different for the students and adults. For the adults, success generally referred to strong academic results in the formal curriculum. For students, success meant learning new skills such as gardening and cooking that would be valuable for life. Success for students also referred to the ability to trick and outsmart peers during play, which contributed to the individual's feelings of success and achievement that built one's self esteem (Navy, 2020; Vazir, n.d.). This perspective of success facilitated students to connect socially and build a sense of belonging, which helped them feel accepted and comfortable with their peers.

Affordances

The environments and various artefacts were affordances for the students. They provided potential or opportunities for students to engage in activities, actions or experiences, as explained by Gibson (2014). The bottom oval and the artefacts in this environment were affordances that gave students a multitude of opportunities and potential actions for use. Students were afforded a wide variety of outdoor environments and artefacts with freedom to retreat, play with artefacts or socially interact with peers.

Practice architectures

I noted that in analysing photographs and stories from participant groups to find themes, there were similarities within participant groups. The themes were elicited by like actions or doings, language or sayings, and relationships or relatings associated with various activities and practices, to illuminate shared participant perspectives about the places in the school that were special for them.

The theory of practice architectures focuses on the existing, regulatory and contextual arrangements that hold the sayings, doings and relatings of practices in place through intersubjective spaces or dimensions within the school. These dimensions include semantic, physical space-time and social spaces. This theory builds on Schatzki's site ontological approach, which is concerned with how social life exists in a particular site, and the ways the "practices and material arrangements" (Schatzki, 2005, p. 471) are bundled together (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018; Niemi & Loukomies, 2020; Wilkinson, 2021).

While some explanation of practice architectures and the "ecology of practices" (Kemmis, 2022a, p. 124) for this school was included in Chapters Three and Four, further discussion is found in Chapter Seven.

5.7   Summary of the findings

The research explored the cultural perspectives of one Lutheran primary school in South Australia. This chapter shared the findings from the photographs and the captions with related stories, which were gathered through photo elicitation interviews (PEI) with students, staff and parents. The school principal did not participate in PEI. The findings from students showed that agency, achievement, and 'freedom to be' were significant for them in their school. The findings from adults were different as they illuminated traditions,

Christianity, investment, having a connected community and a sense of belonging as being significant.

In Chapter Six, the findings from the textual data will be shared and combined with the findings from Chapter Five, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the cultural perspectives in this Lutheran primary school.

6   Words and their meanings

6.1   What the words reveal

This research explored what contributed to the culture of one Lutheran primary school in SA from the perspectives of students, staff and parents. The research was a single, ethnographic case study that used a constructionist epistemology. Photo elicitation interviews (PEI) were the main method for this research. They produced a significant amount of data that provided a deeper understanding of the findings in this research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Yin, 2014). The data from PEI were analysed using Values Coding as proposed by Saldaña (2016). Examples of the outcomes of this process are featured in this chapter.

Findings from the photographs, their captions and related quotes as stories were shared in Chapter Five. They are shown by the brown arrows in Figure 12 (Chapter Five) and Figure 23 (Chapter Six).
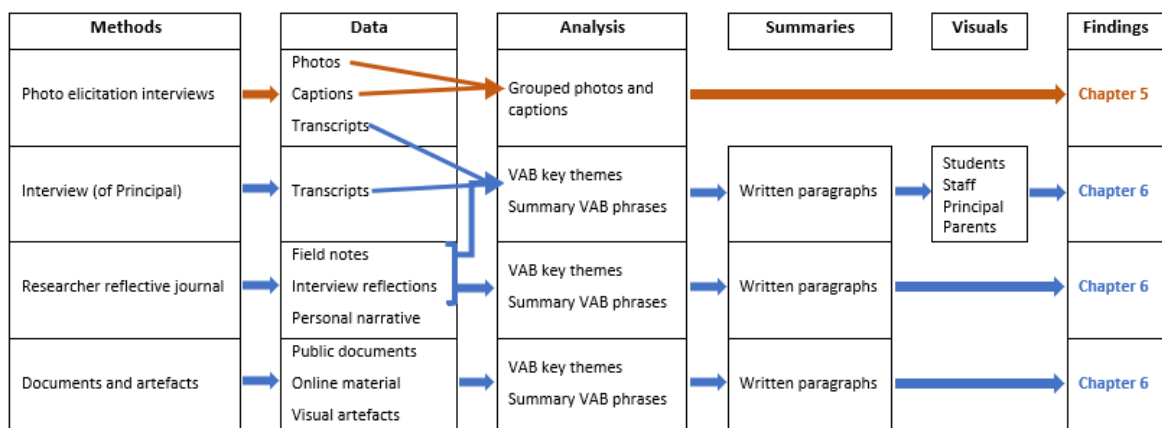
Figure 23 - The flow of Chapters 5 and 6 from methods to the findings

This chapter further develops these findings through the inclusion of words as textual data generated from the interview transcripts, the researcher reflective journal, and documents

and artefacts. These are represented by the blue arrows in Figure 23. Chapter Seven follows as discussion to present the inductive understandings of culture/s generated in this research.

6.2 Words as textual data

The content of the interview transcripts was organised into two categories during the analysis. One category included comments directly associated with the photographs, their captions and related quotes and was included in Chapter Five as 'photographs and their stories'. The second category refers to the principal's interview transcript, and comments that participants volunteered during the PEI that were not directly related to the photographs. For the purposes of this study, this second category is referred to as 'textual data'.

As explained in detail in Chapter Four, the textual data, the researcher reflective journal and the documents and artefacts were coded using Values Coding (Saldaña, 2016). Through this process, a large number of codes surfaced and formed two groups. One group, labelled as 'VAB key words', revealed the dominant value, attitude and belief (VAB) for each participant, for the researcher reflective journal, and for the documents and artefacts. The second group labelled as 'summary VAB phrases', brought together multiple individual codes from each participant's PEI transcript, from the principal's interview transcript, the researcher reflective journal, and from the documents and artefacts.

Together, the VAB key words and summary VAB phrases were used to develop written paragraphs of each participant's transcript, the researcher reflective journal, and the documents and artefacts (Figure 23). Samples of these written paragraphs can be seen at the end of Appendices J, K, L, M, N and O. The written paragraphs synthesised differing

perspectives of participants' transcripts and were intensively reviewed and crafted into visuals that connected ideas and their relationships for more comprehensive findings (shown in Appendix P for students and staff). The written paragraphs and visuals helped generate further themes that reflected participants' perceptions of what contributes to the culture of this school, which are now described. Quotes from research participants, school documents and other school sources are shown in italics.

6.3   Student themes from written paragraphs and visuals

The themes that emerged from the written paragraphs and visuals for the students included belonging and enjoyment, Christian beliefs, and opportunities for freedom in play and success and learning. Student quotes are from the textual data, which were comments they volunteered during the PEI that were not directly related to the photographs.

Belonging and enjoyment

Students shared they were welcomed and accepted by peers in the school. Once they assimilated into the school environment, they were content, happy, and comfortable with routine practices. Students felt at home, which was partly attributed to the kind, helpful and supportive natures of teachers:

> *Some of the teachers … they sort of like make us comfortable, feel okay with the work. (Student 7)*

As student relationships were established and settled, the school was experienced as a safe, comfortable place, enjoyed by students. They spoke positively about play and life at school:

> *Because I like playing in the rocks, and yeah … Because it's just fun … I don't really know. It just is fun. (Student 6)*

> *I just feel that our school has lovely spots for us to go hang out there, and feel really calm and yeah rejoiced. (Student 16)*

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As discussed by Hope (2012), when students enjoyed school, felt welcomed, accepted and loved to be there, they felt a sense of belonging that was family-like. Gabel (2018) acknowledged that belonging develops from mutually respectful and supportive social relationships. This student shared:

I enjoy just getting the chance to talk to my friends, talk to other people in the class … having an activity together – just to enjoy others' company. (Student 8)

As students have a strong sense of belonging in school, their holistic school experience is more positive and their capacity to engage in learning is improved (Hope, 2012; Sime et al., 2021; Towns, 2018). This creates optimal conditions for students to learn and feel safe, comfortable and happy at school.

Christian beliefs

As a Lutheran school, students accepted and respected the Christian beliefs, practices, teachings and symbols:

Lutheran Schools believe in God and Jesus. And they spend lots of time about Jesus and God. (Student 3)

I like praying, because I think about Jesus and God when I pray to them. (Student 4)

So normally in worship there's a Bible … So every time you do worship you light the candles. And it shows that God's with us. (Student 11)

Students enjoyed learning about Jesus from Bible stories and felt a connection to God:

Jesus and God make me feel really happy, because I'm part of their world and I feel really connected to them. When I learn about them, I feel really connected to them. (Student 3)

Because I think it's just a lovely nature – knowing that God is with us in this school. (Student 16)

All students learnt about God through the formal and informal curricula, which included Christian Studies lessons and discussions, and Bible stories and worship messages. For some students, their existing personal faith and belief in God was nurtured. Other students had opportunities to learn about Christianity. Students explained:

Say, someone may come in to this school and not know anything about God or Jesus, and when they leave they'd know a lot – even if they don't think it. But, they may think

… I don't know anything about Christianity; I'm not someone who goes to church every weekend. But, it doesn't matter because they'll still teach you, but you don't have to believe it. But, when you do Christian Studies, they're going to talk to you about God and Jesus and what they did. And when they kind of step back and say, oh wow, I'm actually enjoying this. They … may go to church, they may start praying before tea every night; they may do something that may change their lives. They may believe that if something goes wrong that God will help me, or will save me, or do something for me. Yeah. (Student 9)

In another school … they might say, this is what's true and you have to stick with it. But in this school, we don't say that … we're allowed to change our minds, but we learn that God is the God. (Student 16)

At this school, Christianity was socialised and present in school experiences. The formal and informal curricula were the means for Christianity to influence student learning, personal beliefs, school encounters, and relational experiences. Christianity permeated students' lives at school (Ballano, 2020; Berry, 2014), where they were provided with various Christian experiences that shaped their beliefs, values, attitudes, knowledge and actions.

Opportunities

Students had access to a variety of indoor and outdoor activities and games at school, which mostly happened in the outdoor environments during play breaks. The school environments provided different affordances for students because conditions were varied across the school (Clark & Uzzell, 2002). While some outdoor environments were grassed areas, dirt or paved areas, there was also a central semi-enclosed space in the school. Some students were curious and explored the potential or affordances of these environments and resources. Other students were engaged in continued play from previous play breaks. In all circumstances, students had freedom to play where they experienced success and learning.

Freedom in play

Students' play breaks held significance for them. Students looked forward to the freedom they had to play during breaks because they chose what, where and with whom to play:

*We can choose what we're going to do – so we can be independent about what we're
doing – and kind of setting us up for life, I guess. (Student 9)*

As students had freedom and agency in their play, they had fun. They negotiated games,
activities, and whether to engage in active or quieter play. Research by Quaglia and Fox
(2018) found that student agency and choices of this nature helped students develop skills
in decision making for life beyond school, a concept that emerged during student
interviews.

It is significant that students referred to play regularly during interviews, which was in the
context of general play, nature play or from access to playgrounds. During play, students'
experiences of learning were informal. They developed creativity and curiosity, connected
new learning with past experiences, and developed relationships with peers (Australian
Government, 2019). According to Chancellor and Hyndman (2017), children engaged in
play develop "social, emotional, cognitive, and language skills that contribute to the ability
to establish effective relationships with peers" (p. 185). This play was unstructured, outside
of scheduled classroom time, and involved students learning skills and dispositions as per
the *general capabilities* in the *Australian Curriculum*[5] (Australian Curriculum and Reporting
Authority, 2010 to present).

Success and learning

Students valued and were aware of their successes and achievements at school. These
were experienced from challenges, winning competitions, undertaking different tasks, and
from learning new skills. Despite challenges and struggles, students persevered to do their

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5 The Australian Curriculum was developed by ACARA (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority) and
provides schools with a national curriculum of teaching and learning for students from Foundation to Year
10. Further information is found at www.acara.edu.au.

best. They thrived in new experiences such as public performances and were proud of their achievements and the opportunities afforded to them at school. Students shared:

> *Because I get this feeling inside that I'm learning something new. (Student 3)*
> *It reminded me that you can just 'do it!' (Student 6)*

It was interesting that students viewed success and learning as significant, even though their interviews focused on the outdoors or areas away from the structure and formality of their classrooms. This implies learning and success for students was ongoing and accessible to them during the school day, suggesting they were regularly afforded learning opportunities through both the formal and informal curricula.

6.4   Staff themes from written paragraphs and visuals

Staff themes that emerged from the written paragraphs and visuals included belonging, Lutheran beliefs, relationships and representation. Quotes used are from staff comments volunteered during the PEI that were not directly related to the photographs.

Belonging

The theme of belonging is closely linked to the theme of community connectedness. Most staff valued the family-like sense of belonging they felt at this school, which developed as staff were welcomed and accepted into the school, and as they spent time working and socialising with colleagues:

> *The front office-staff are welcoming, displaying kid's work, and making it a welcome place … Being part of a team is important, and the staff group gels. (Staff Member 2)*

While staff wanted to be included in this community and had a deep desire to belong, circumstances meant this was not always possible:

> *I don't live in this community. I've not grown up in this community, I'm not part of this community – and so for me it's just a place of work. (Staff Member 6)*

As an outlier to other staff responses, this person spoke of a desire to be personally known by colleagues in this school community because of their experiences at other Lutheran

schools. However, circumstantial differences meant their sense of belonging was challenged to give different experiences and insights. This staff member did not live in the community, was not a parent or teacher at this school and was employed part time while juggling difficult family matters.

Most staff were willing to attend non-compulsory school events and celebrations because they valued connecting socially and being with others:

> *Staff don't have to be here … they don't want to miss out – so they are here. It feels good that they all want to be here. (Personal communication, 2017)*

The intrinsic desire for staff to experience and feel belonging in this school was significant because it helped them feel accepted and part of the school community.

Lutheran beliefs

As Lutheranism is a branch of Christianity, people who were associated with this school referred to it as both a Christian school and Lutheran school. There were two areas that emerged for staff in relation to the school's Lutheran beliefs. One was their calling to serve at the school and the other was about the relational nature of people associated with the school.

Called to serve

The cross as a symbol represents the life and death of Jesus Christ. It is a reminder for Christians as followers of Christ, to use their gifts and talents to serve other people:

> *It means that we value God … Here we learn about God and it's part of what we do and what we value. It's in our Christian Studies and our worship and is an important integral part of our curriculum here. (Staff Member 2)*

> *The cross would be the most important for me … a reminder of what we're here for (Staff Member 3)*

It is assumed that staff in Lutheran schools will use their gifts and talents in their vocations to serve their students in the hope that students may also develop and grow a personal faith and belief in Christ:

> *A lot of our students aren't from faith backgrounds … that's why I'm here. This is my calling at this point, this is my vocation. (Staff Member 3)*

For staff with a belief in God, the cross is a reminder of their vocation or call to serve in Lutheran schools. For other staff, the cross is a symbol that teaches people about the life and work of Jesus Christ in the hope they will recognise their calling to serve.

Relational nature

Staff identified an approach or way of behaving with people that was distinctive, cultural and valued. It involved people caring, supporting, respecting, and trusting others regardless of who they were and without being self-indulgent:

> *I see influential people … The way they interact and talk, the way they speak out very much impacts on the culture of the place. (Staff Member 4)*

> *Lutherans don't like self-indulgence. I like that part about being in a Lutheran school. (Staff Member 5)*

The inclusive and personal approach staff have in the school shapes how people relate and interact with each other. A newer staff member noted that this was different from their experiences at other workplaces:

> *When I came prior to putting in an application and wandered around, that stood out - the way everyone gathers there, the way they interact with the students, and the way that the school is managed. (Staff Member 4)*

Relationships

As people were comfortable to socialise with others in the school, staff noticed how the relationships or the connections between staff strengthened. Staff valued interacting with colleagues, students, and their families. People connected with others at gathering places

on the school grounds or at school social events. Staff saw community strength through parent interactions:

> We have a lot of parents that come in and help. The community that's built with parents through that is fantastic … it's great to see those connections. There are nights … that are focused on building the community … just focused on connections and socialisation … organic connections between people. (Staff Member 3)

At the start and end of the school day, some staff chose to connect with colleagues to reflect on their school day together. As a regular and informal practice, it grew relationships and community for these staff, which contributed to the school's culture.

Representation

As a theme for staff and explained below, representation surfaced through the artefacts, people, places, and practices in the school that held meaning for people (Hall, 2013).

Christian artefacts such as the cross, pavers, and plaques in this school had meaning and were discussed with the photographs in Chapter Five. Other artefacts with meaning included Indigenous artwork and language, and welcome totems that acknowledged the traditional custodians of the land on which the school was located. These artefacts were reminders of the rich Indigenous history and heritage of the land on which the school was located:

> It's an Indigenous garden, it's an Indigenous area … We do our welcome to country for our big events, even on all of our doors for our classroom we've got a little thing stuck there on how to say 'welcome' and 'goodbye'. (Staff Member 1)

Staff were aware of key staff personnel who represented Lutheran beliefs. These are likened to 'heroes and heroines' in the literature on culture (Bolman & Deal, 2021; Peterson & Deal, 1998). As a representative of the Lutheran church, the pastor taught people about God and upheld Lutheran church teachings and practices. In a similar way, the principal represented the Lutheran school, and its traditions and practices as a leader and advocate

for the school and its culture (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2016). Other school leaders

had responsibility for Lutheran traditions and practices:

> It's powerful leadership when you see a school protect what they stand for, and say 'No
> fundamentally – that's not who we are'. (Staff Member 3)

The front office staff welcomed and assisted visitors and staff to the school. Their role was

significant as they represented:

> the face of the school. I've found they've been very helpful and supportive. They are the
> sort of people you want at the front of your organisation ... they're always very
> accommodating and helpful. (Staff Member 4)

Staff identified places with meaning such as the Undercroft, staffroom and their classroom.

As gathering places in the school, these were discussed in Chapter Five.

Staff identified meaningful representations of practices, events and celebrations. Morning

devotion as a staff practice was communally binding through the rituals, Bible reading,

reflective message, music and prayer. As explained in Chapter Two, weekly worship as a

culturally binding practice held traditions and liturgical rituals linked to scripture and

Lutheran theological roots from predecessors of this school:

> Probably the biggest binding thing is the way they do worship and praise. And that's
> liturgical ... If you're doing worship, you've got to ... obey the precepts and the
> requirements of the Lutheran church. The Lutheran way and the teaching – it's quite
> distinctive; it's quite prevalent. (Staff Member 5)

This same staff member recognised that through Lutheran traditions, the dedication,

humility, and investment of the school's predecessors continued through the school rituals,

practices and artefacts:

> In Lutheran schools – possibly because of the history, the tradition of the theology is
> something that's been jealously kept ... If you go to any Lutheran institution, there's a
> missional statement somewhere ... the pavers – they're missional statements ... The
> cross was at the front ... that's a missional statement as well ... These consciousnesses
> come from traditions. (Staff Member 5)

These practices had evolved from Lutheran traditions over the years. They were valued and

held significant meaning. Other practices recognised by staff at this school included

assemblies, reading, volunteer programs and lunchtime activities where staff and volunteers could use their gifts and talents to serve the school community.

6.5   Principal themes from written paragraphs

The interview with the principal for this research revealed themes discussed below, that included beliefs, new and old, the relational nature of this school and relationships.

Beliefs

The principal implied that beliefs in God, in people and in the school were significant. With these beliefs came a prevailing trust, faith and hope in the good of other people.

While the principal was aware that some people in the school community held beliefs about God from a Christian, Lutheran or other perspective, there were other people with no belief or faith in a god. People were able to experience Christianity in this school through devotion and worship practices and through the caring actions of people, including service. The principal saw the school as a community where people were able to sense some stability in life and experience what a belief in God can be like:

> *The school provides a strong collective sense of touching base with something that's stable ... [people] they're reaching out. Sometimes they don't want to do it themselves, they don't want to commit to it but they generally value it. And they sometimes value it in other people more than they value it in themselves. (Principal)*

The principal held a belief in the staff and parents of this school, that they would do what they could for the best interests of the students. The staff were committed to this school, served with care, and were invested in relationships with students and colleagues:

> *That concept of service and caring about kids as individuals and creations of God – that's strong motivation for staff here – you can feel it. When they do stuff for kids it's not because 'it's my job' or 'I just need to get the parents off my back.' It's out of a pretty deep love for trying to make the kids bid a bit better ... The teachers are so expecting all the time ... There's always something else and that's what good teachers do. (Principal)*

The principal had belief and hope that parent relationships with the school and other people would grow positively and ultimately benefit the children:

> *I certainly want to see a greater partnership between school and home … We can pretty much achieve anything if we're working together - if staff are working together, and staff with parents are working together. (Principal)*

While acknowledging that there were challenging times with staff and parents, the principal's vision, hope and desire for strong, positive relationships was significant.

While families enrolled their children in this school, the principal had faith and hope that its reputation would:

> *be the school of choice in our local community. (Appendix T)*

There was an assumption by the principal that through the school's values, people would experience Christianity and develop or grow their own trust, faith and hope in God. This hope was about a desire for people ask questions, to participate and learn about the acts of service around them, and to want to know more about Christianity and Jesus Christ because of their experiences at this school:

> *that deep question of, 'Why do we exist? Why do we even run a school? Why do we bother with education?' – which I reckon is actually at the heart of what makes us different … That sense that we exist to serve the families and offer them a message of hope. Some take that message of hope and some don't. Some we're supporting what they already do, for some it's sowing some seeds. (Principal)*

Old and the new

The principal was previously employed at this school as a teacher some time ago, and was able to share some of the contrasts between the 'old and the new'. Comparisons were made between older stone buildings with newer purpose builds, and between experienced staff and early career teachers. The principal reflected on some previously challenging church relationships that had become more positive, unifying and respectful, and on some traditional school practices and celebrations that had evolved in new ways to

accommodate the needs of current students and families. Examples include involving students in the worship band, inviting parents to assist with children's reading and hosting school community events to build relationships with families. A final comparison was made with the recent work to develop the school's current vision statement and core propositions with the staff team, resulting in the development of new marketing and promotional brochures to ensure consistent messaging. This theme suggests an evolving cultural pattern of change where students' school experiences are improved:

> *To be a part of what I hope is a better future and to play into that is important … The challenge for us - we're trying to be better in the way we do the curriculum stuff … Hopefully what happens then is the good things stay and the bad things get changed. (Principal)*

Relational nature

The principal noticed a way of behaving or a relational nature associated with Christianity in the school. Referred to as an approach or the 'way we do things here', it impacted how the staff, students and parents related with each other in the school environment. The principal inferred this nature was welcoming, inclusive, caring and relational:

> *It's pretty inclusive. The parents are happy with their kids being in a Christian environment with the Christian values … It's in the interplay of why we do things with the kids and the families that the Christian stuff happens … So many parents get their sense of community through the school … Yeh they're developing their relationships with other parents. (Principal)*

Relationships

For the principal, strong relationships and partnerships with people were a priority. Through relationships, school families and friends connected and developed a sense of belonging:

> *We care about the relationships that we have amongst each other; families … look to the school as a source of stability, role modelling and balancing. (Principal)*

The principal wanted this school to be a place of belonging where stable, positive relationships were modelled by staff, experienced by students, and felt in the school and its community.

6.6 Parent themes from written paragraphs and visuals

This research showed that for parents, the most significant themes from the textual data and now explained, included advocacy, Christianity, and being a connected, caring community.

Advocacy

Parents were grateful to have found this school for their children because of its beliefs and values. As advocates, they spoke well of this school:

> *I just want to tell people how much we love the school, and how much so many people love the school, because it's just amazing. I don't hear people talk about other schools in the same way. (Parent 2)*

Parents recognised the staff as advocates who gave of their time and themselves. Staff were invested in the school for the betterment of the students and modelled a 'way of being' in the school appreciated by parents. In particular, the influence of the principal and leadership were noted as significant because they shaped the staff, who then shaped the children and ultimately their families:

> *So yeah everything that they do influences the family. (Parent 2)*
>
> *And it's the attitude perhaps of this little mini-community. And it's what comes through … And how that's passed on probably from the leadership – from the principal to the kids – and amongst the parents. It gives you a sense of united sort of values. (Parent 4)*

Parents valued and were grateful for staff. As advocates and role models, staff positively influenced, valued and cared for the children, generating a desire in parents to reciprocate by being positive advocates for the school.

Christianity

Christianity was influential in the school and significant for parents. It was experienced by parents through programs that provided care and support, through the practices and rituals of worship and through community events. Parents noticed Christianity in symbols such as the cross and the Bible, through the school values and through their engagements in the school:

> *I think it feels quite Christian. (Parent 1)*
>
> *the school has Christ as the centre … it's not just part of the school, but it's alongside everything … It really is. And that's what I feel. (Parent 4)*

Parents indicated that Christianity and the school's feel were interrelated. They were forthcoming about a particular feel they noticed when relating with others in the school, referred to as 'it'. They shared that 'it' was an approach that was Christian-like, family-like, empathic in nature, yet unique and difficult to describe. Parents valued this nature and were protective of 'it'. Possibly because 'it' was cherished, they did not want 'it' to be lost:

> *It's a feeling of this is just right; this is a good place; it feels right. And people can't always describe it, and I can't really either … we all feel it – we're all so grateful for it – that we want to look after it and protect it. (Parent 3)*

One parent acknowledged that this Christian-like approach and feel contributed to a valued and healthy balance in the students, which meant their own children were very happy at the school. There were some parents who became protective of this school and its community because the school values complemented those of the home.

The approach and feel experienced by parents was attributed to the school's Lutheran heritage, traditions and values, which is cultural (Deal & Peterson, 2016b; Noble, 2005; Stolp & Smith, 1995). As acknowledged by Ballano (2020) and Natzke (1996), the flow-on effects of rituals and accepted histories in this school community are significant. One parent explained:

I think it maybe comes about by those common values … how the school is governed perhaps by the Lutheran church – how then the principal is interviewed, selected – so that they represent what's important … that will trickle down … teachers are brought in that express those same values and sentiments and have a passion for the same significant areas and values. And then, parents like me will sense that when they're looking to enrol their kids and put their kids in here if they feel the values that they own themselves are going to be expressed here as well … so I see that culture grow through encouraging similar kind of people with similar values to sort of come on board and be part of the community. (Parent 4).

Connected, caring community

Through the school's Carer's Group, the Kitchen Garden Program, and morning reading program, parent volunteers were able to give of their time and expertise in support of others.

School information explains the Carer's Group is:

"Sharing Jesus' love through prayer and care." Our school has a group of carers who support our school families in times of need or care. You may like to offer to be a class carer. (Parent Handbook, 2017)

This group of parents actively met, looked out for and cared for families, parents, students and others in need. Examples of actions experienced by parents included providing meals for families in need, helping families through times when there are hardships or illnesses, giving cards to people in times of grief, and meeting to pray for people in the school or community. Through the Carer's Group, new parents increase their opportunities to connect with existing parents and families, while volunteering their time and skills for others. Carer's Group volunteers experienced Christian care in action:

If someone's hurting, we will go and help them until they're back on their feet. So there's that real sense of community and Christian caring within that, and helping one another. (Parent 1)

At the Carer's Group they do fantastic stuff to make you feel loved. (Parent 2)

One parent shared their experience of receiving care from the school Carer's Group:

The end of that year … I ended up in hospital … And it was just a real bad time for my family, and friends and everything else … just seeing the teachers – the support that the school gave – especially [child]'s teacher; the other parents – the kids … They were really - taking the kids home, bringing up cooked food for [name]; it was just mind

blowing … now I sort of get the idea that it is actually this community that lives up here. (Parent 5)

As Parent 5 inferred, the Carer's Group was culturally embedded in the school as a community-building experience.

In addition to the Carer's Group, parents were able to volunteer their time to assist with food preparation and cooking in the Kitchen Garden Program, and with the morning reading program with children in class. As parents became part of these voluntary groups, they experienced and learnt more about the school's values, beliefs and service actions, which helped them socialise and understand the school's practices and actions.

Amongst school parents and other people associated with the school, relationships grew as people interacted at school gatherings organised by parents and friends. A staff member shared:

It's strange … when the parents are here for a function …. it's almost as if they forget that they are parents. (Personal communication, 2017)

Parents were grateful for this school community. They had opportunities to interact socially, to connect, and grow as community:

So it's just such a lovely community, and such friendly people, and everyone has a real interest in making the school work and making the community work. (Parent 3)

6.7   Themes from the researcher reflective journal

The researcher reflective journal used throughout this research illuminated the themes of Christian practices, and community and belonging. Christian practices, such as staff devotion and school worship, were regular, communal traditions at this school as discussed earlier. According to Bartsch (2013), they were "part of the life of a Lutheran school" (p. 202). School worship was significant because it involved the school community meeting

together to hear God's Word, with many school families choosing to attend and participate.

Christian worship:

> provides an opportunity to introduce staff and students to the significance and practice of liturgical worship and to some of the rites and practices which are part of such worship. (Bartsch, 2013, p. 231)

Bartsch (2013) explains the significance of this Christian practice for believers and for those who do not yet believe in God:

> School worship needs to be seen as the essential communal activity of the Lutheran school. Through it, God forgives, feeds and nourishes believers to live their new life in Christ, and he reaches out in his grace and mercy to those who do not yet share faith in him. (p. 244)

In this school, Christian practices are important traditions that are communal experiences for people. They contain rituals with cultural and religious meaning that have evolved from traditions of the Lutheran church. On the significance of traditions and rituals, Peterson and Deal (1998) explain that:

> Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that has built up over time … This set of informal expectations and values shapes how people think, feel, and act in schools. This highly enduring web of influence binds the school together and makes it special. (p. 28)

As a researcher in the school community for this research, I experienced the welcoming and accepting nature of staff. I was warmly greeted and accepted by students and respected by parents.

Students and families were excited to see each other, happy to be at school, and were smiling and laughing with each other each morning. During the day, students were happy to play with friends or enjoyed engaging in their work. People were connected. They accepted and respected others and worked together as community. From my observations, engagements with students, staff and parents, and general encounters at the school as a researcher, there was a positive sense of community and belonging at this school. It was a community that was welcoming, accepting, caring and that looked out for others.

6.8   Themes from documents and artefacts

Themes from the documents and artefacts gathered at this school and from digital sources revealed it was a connected, Christian community.

Information provided by the school and accessed through online sources showed the dominant themes for this school were connectedness and community. While these words appeared in many digital and hard copy publications and featured in the *Core Propositions* for the school, the school was presented as a connected community through documents and online images of people engaging in activities, experiences and celebrations.

Artefacts around the school such as the cross and plaques, displayed Bible passages and school statements showing the school's connections to the Lutheran church. The cross represented the school's Christ-centredness, which was included in the school logo and on documents and artefacts. The school's vision statement reads:

> *Our school is Christ centred, aiming to build good citizenship through service/action and being good stewards of God's creation. (Promotional Document 8)*

Other symbols and memorials located around the school included Christian Bible texts, references to God, and the Ichthys or Christian fish symbol (Coffman, 2008). The artefacts and Christian experiences shared in devotions and worship portrayed the school as a Christian community.

6.9   Comparing different data groups

The findings summarised in Table 10 from 'words and their meaning' in this chapter, included VAB key themes and written paragraphs from all research participants, the researcher reflective journal, and the documents and artefacts. This section reveals the main themes, and the similarities and differences across the data groups.

Data group	VAB key themes (VAB = values, attitudes, beliefs)	Written Paragraphs (Developed from summary VAB phrases)
Students	Enjoyment Freedom Learning Success	Belonging Christian beliefs Opportunities: *achievement, freedom*
Staff	Belonging Community connectedness	Lutheran beliefs: *actions, relational nature* Relationships Representation: *artefacts, people, places, practices*
Principal	Relationships	Belief: *in God, in people, in the school* Old and new Relational nature Relationships
Parents	Christianity Community of care	Advocacy Christian influence Connected people
Researcher reflective journal	Belonging Community	Belonging Christianity Community
Documents and artefacts	Connected	Christian Community Connected

Table 10 - VAB key themes and written paragraph themes for all data groups

Similarities across the data groups

Belonging and community

The themes of belonging, community, connected and relationships are interrelated. As shown in Table 10, these themes appeared across all data groups. This school was illuminated as a connected community of people that values relationships, with a sense of belonging that some perceived to be family-like.

Christianity

A theme related to Christianity or Lutheranism appeared across each data group shown in Table 10, which revealed the school's connectedness to its Lutheran traditions as being valued, accepted and respected by the school community. Christianity was an influence in

the school's practices, in the relationships between people, and through teaching and learning experiences. This Christian influence aligns with the school's vision statement, is outlined in the core proposition statement *Connected to our God* (Appendix T), and the foundation statement for *Growing Deep* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016).

Adult perspectives

It is significant to note that the adult perspectives of staff, the principal and parents, the researcher reflective journal, and documents and artefacts reflected similar themes on the culture of this school. This is presumably because they were all provided by adults. The themes from the students were different, which highlights the need to include student perspectives when engaging in school research because they can potentially offer different insights to school culture.

Differences across the data groups

There were differing perspectives for the students and adults involved in this research, with four examples shared below. These are important to explore in more detail given there is limited research on the differences in students' and adults' perspectives on what contributes to school culture.

Success, learning, freedom

Student learning, success, freedom and enjoyment emerged from the student's VAB key themes, as expressed through their positive feelings for this school and their sense of freedom or agency. As these themes were not evident in the other data groups, it highlights the experiences of students that sound, look, and feel different. Voice empowers students to take more active roles in shaping their futures; it increases personal development,

leadership and decision making, and improves engagement and motivation (Coffey & Lavery, 2018; Prosser & Burke, 2011; Quaglia & Fox, 2018).

Teacher focus by students

I was surprised that only three students mentioned the principal or other school leaders, despite their presence and visibility during play breaks. Instead, it was significant that students spoke highly of their teachers and the relationships they had with them through their classroom experiences. Students had frequent contact with their teachers and strongly appreciated their kindness and support:

> We've just got such good teachers, and kind teachers. They just help us so much. And they make some work easier. (Student 6)

> I'd say we have good teachers, and kind teachers … our teachers want to help you. The teachers are happy to answer your questions. (Student 12)

Lutheran beliefs

Although Lutheran beliefs emerged for the staff and principal, they did not emerge from the students, parents, researcher reflective journal, or the documents and artefacts. The staff and principal provided deep perspectives on Lutheran theology, the school's heritage and traditions, and the artefacts or missional statements in the school. One likely explanation is that there was a high proportion of staff who identified as Lutheran in this school, compared to the Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) and Lutheran Schools Association (LSA) statistical data provided in Chapter Four. Another possibility was due to a perception and understanding by some staff that Lutheran schools have a cultural distinctiveness, which has been stated by leaders in Lutheran education at meetings and conferences (Personal communication, April 2018). This means that a deeper level of knowledge and understanding of the history, traditions and practices of Lutheran churches and schools were possibly brought to this school by staff.

Beliefs, old and new

The principal's interview revealed new perspectives that included beliefs in people and the school, and the contrasts between the old and the new.

By believing in the staff, the principal was confident that the staff would act in the best interests of the students, the school and for their colleagues. The principal believed the staff were deeply committed to their calling to work at the school, and were invested in supporting their students.

The theme 'old and new' that emerged from the principal's textual data was unique across all data groups. It included comparisons of old and new experiences of the school, associated memories, relationships with church personnel, and the reworking of the school's vision and core propositions. These comparisons were possible because of the principal's previous employment at this school as a teacher some years ago, which provided some historical and traditional context to the school's practices, changes and progress over time.

Voluntary programs

Parents spoke about the Carer's Group and other voluntary programs offered at the school, organised for people to support school families and children. These programs are significant because volunteers experience service by giving their time, skills and support. As explained in Chapter Two and based on Lutheran theology, Lutheran schools are often referred to as places of grace and hope that offer Christian care and love through the gifts and talents of others. This is service in action that gives others hope (Bartsch, 2013; Lutheran Education Australia, 2016). Regardless of the faith or belief of families and when hardships are encountered, families or individuals may experience care, love and

compassion from others in the school community. These words of Hauser (2016) are significant as they explain the connection to service and love for Lutheran schools which grew from the work of Luther through the Reformation:

> Lutheran educators make great Lovers. Our church was born out of the Reformation after Luther had rediscovered the gospel, the good news that God is for us and not against us … Lutheran schools, therefore, emphasise grace to all. We try to make our schools places of love … A warm, family ambience is what we all strive for. We see our students as being precious, to their parents, to God, and to us. We ask not what the student can do for the school, but what the school can do for the student. We look after people in need. We provide supportive working environments for our staff members. We love everybody, even when it hurts. (p. 6)

6.10   Bringing all themes together

The themes derived from the photographs and their stories in Chapter Five, together with the themes from the words and their meanings in Chapter Six are provided in Appendix O, where different colours represent related themes. After sorting and rearranging the themes from all the research data, the six main themes that emerged included achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community. These themes are interrelated because of their intricate cultural connections to this Lutheran primary school. For example, the theme of belonging is very closely related to the theme of community where people have a sense of being together or connected, and the theme of advocacy is connected to Christianity.

In reflecting deeply on the meaning of these themes, the literature reviewed in Chapter Three and the research experiences of PEI in this case study, I am aware that a different perspective was revealed through these themes. The case study had evolved into a study of *practices* related to the theory of practice architectures as explored by Kemmis et al. (2014). This means the research was a study of *practices* of achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community. These practices "are composed of sayings, doings

and relatings that hang together" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 33) as the practices happen or are enacted by practitioners, or the people participating in them. People participate in these practices in different ways and degrees in intersubjective spaces or dimensions holding the practices in place. In so doing, they shape and are shaped by the practice architectures already present in the school (Grootenboer, 2018; Kemmis, 2022b, 2022c; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). These architectures or social patterns are detectable and invisible "cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 33) contextualised for or within this school. Cultural-discursive arrangements include the language or discourses currently in place in the school, that regulate what and how talk happens. For example, through the talk of leaders and teachers during worship, class time and via printed publications. Material-economic arrangements mean the physical structures, spaces and resources that enable or restrict actions and processes. They are possible in different rooms and spaces, with indoor and outdoor equipment and structures. Social-political arrangements include how relationships work within existing hierarchies, powers and influences that include students, parents, teachers and leaders (Kemmis, 2022b; Mahon et al., 2017; Niemi & Loukomies, 2020; Thorkelsdóttir, 2016; Uchida et al., 2020; Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015). As existing and new practices interconnect and overlap in the site of the school, they become what Kemmis (2022d) refers to as an "ecology of practices" (p. 130).

Further analysis and synthesis of this research illuminated other less-dominant practices as part of the main practices, which have been labelled as 'minor practices'. They appear in the table in Appendix U and are shown visually in Figure 24. While descriptions for the main practices and their related minor practices were included with photographs or words in Chapters Five or Six, a short synthesis of each practice follows.
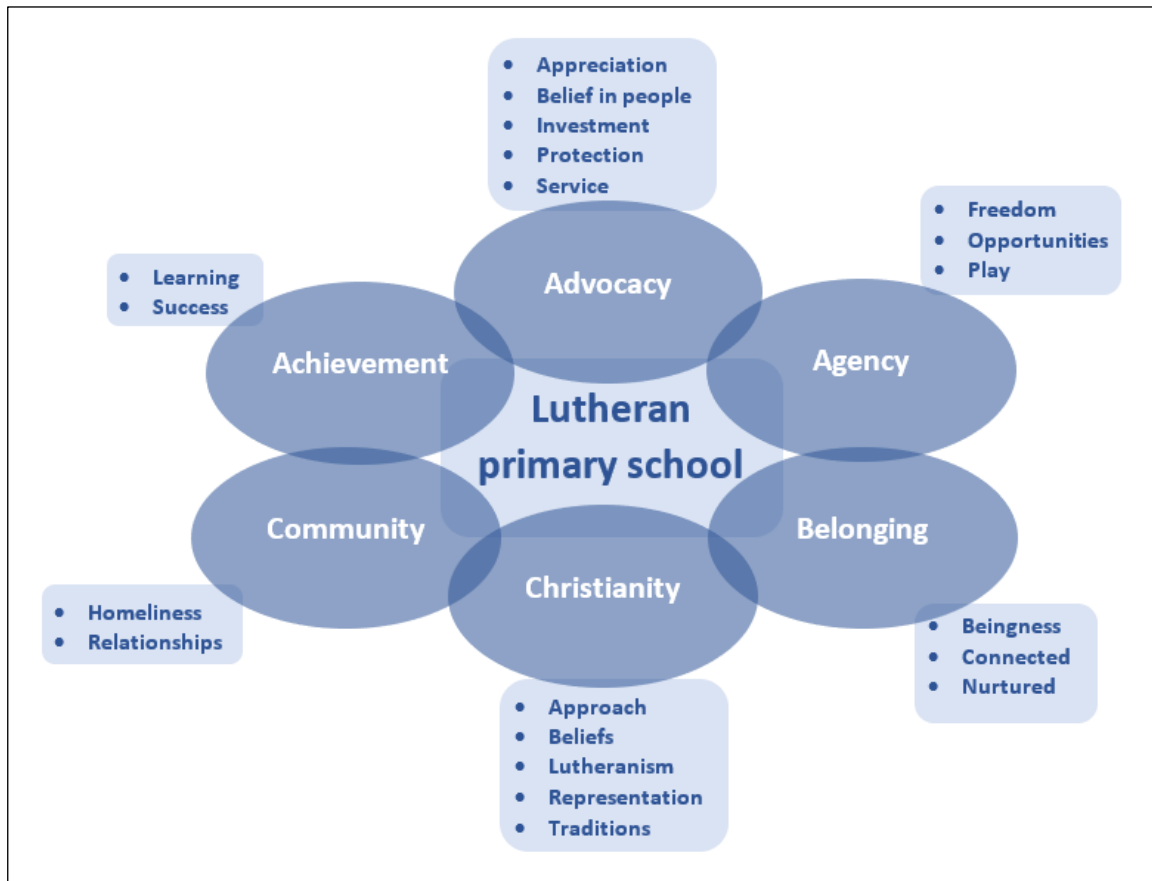
Figure 24 – The main and minor practices of influence for this school

In synthesising the practices, it is important to recognise each practice as:

> a relationship in which participants speak language characteristic of the practice (*sayings*), engage in activities of the practice in set-ups characteristic of the practice (*doings*), and enter relationships with other people and objects characteristic of the practice (*relatings*), all oriented by the distinctive kind of project characteristic of the practice. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 31)

A project as a purposeful task, activity or practice being undertaken, consists of practices and practice architectures that 'hang together' in what Schatzki (2005) refers to as "nexuses of practices and material arrangements" (p. 471), with characteristic "sayings, doings and relatings" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 43). Different practices, projects and practice architectures exist and happen interdependently and develop as complex ecological systems.

Achievement

The practice of achievement includes the practices of learning and success experienced and strongly voiced by students through their words, actions and relationships with others. The practice of achievement for students was experienced in learning practices at school, where they progressed activities or games during play breaks, or learnt new skills of value for their future life outside of school. For students, the practices of activities, games and skills held particular sayings, doings and relatings with meanings that implied power, acceptance or compliance. As students accomplished challenges or personal goals, they experienced the practice of success. While sometimes this sense of success came from competing in games during play breaks, at other times it was experienced through opportunities to engage in creative practices in the kitchen with food, or from their experiences of performing on stage.

Advocacy

Advocacy as a practice, was revealed as people acknowledged and demonstrated favourable actions of people for this school. Parents and students demonstrated a strong appreciation for this school and its community through their words, actions and relationships with others. There was a sense of hope and belief that people would respond in helpful ways to those who needed it through their words and actions of love, and in their expressions of hope for the future. Participants were protective of the relationships with others and the people in this school. They invested in the school through their actions by caring for families in need and nurturing relationships across the community. Staff were invested in the school and strived for the best outcomes for the students in their care. Parents and staff served other people through their actions, relationships and by using a

language of care. They had a desire to act positively in response to the love and care they received by people in this community.

Agency

Agency as a practice, referred to the freedom and choices that students made in this school, which happened mostly during their play breaks. Students had many opportunities to choose their play during these breaks, which may have been indoors or outdoors, with nature, friends, and involved particular words and actions. Students chose the games and activities as practices in which they wanted to play, such as sitting with friends in the shade or reading novels. They engaged in words, actions and relationships specific to those games and activities.

Belonging

As a practice, belonging was dominant with the students participating in this research. Students shared that they enjoyed the school, and expressed feelings of being happy, content and comfortable, which are qualities to indicate the sense of belonging was dominant. The adults noticed a connectedness that was related to belonging, where people welcomed, accepted, included and respected others through demonstrated words, actions and relationships. Newer staff and parents were aware of these experiences. Over time, and as relationships were developed and nurtured, the school environment felt homely, family-like, happy and positive for new staff and parents.

Christianity

The practice of Christianity underpins the school's rituals, beliefs and values. The school's heritage and past traditions shape and inform its current rituals, actions and artefacts. While composed of interconnected sayings, doings and relatings entwined together, they

have evolved from practices and happenings in the past from the Lutheran church. The actions of Lutheranism included events, activities, celebrations and rituals in the school. Artefacts, symbols and signs as representations of meaning, held significance historically and culturally. The school's beliefs centred on words, actions and relationships demonstrated in the love and grace of God through Jesus Christ. These beliefs inform the relational nature of staff and leaders with students and families, which were demonstrated through caring and supportive actions, words and expressed thoughts.

Community

Community as a practice, was demonstrated through highly valued relationships by the principal, staff, parents and students. As a school community over the years, people enjoyed being together, developing relationships, participating in events and community activities and conversing with them. A variety of practices were shared by research participants that included people looking out for others, connecting with them, and regularly supporting them through words, actions and growing relationships. It seemed that the practice of caring for others at this school in a gentle, loving way was an extension of the school's Christian education program, which modelled and taught the importance of valuing, respecting and including others in a community.

6.11 Summary of this chapter

The previous chapter shared the findings from the photographs and their stories of this research that explored the cultures of the case study school using photo elicitation interviews. This chapter presented the findings from the words and their meanings from all data groups. The data groups included VAB (values, attitudes, beliefs) key themes and summary written paragraphs for all participants, the researcher reflective journal, and the

documents and artefacts. In converging the findings from this and the previous chapter, six main themes as *practices* were identified. These were the practices of achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community. Each main practice included minor practices, which have been discussed in Chapter Five or Six.

Chapter Seven brings the findings of this research together with the literature from Chapter Three. Final conclusions from the research are shared, which includes the contribution of this research to knowledge, and further recommendations for future research.

7   Research discussion and conclusions

This case study research explores the culture/s of one Lutheran primary school in South Australia (SA) from the perspectives of students, staff and parents. Central to the research is a constructionist epistemology based on the understanding that individuals construct meaning from their life experiences as they engage with their world and other people (Crotty, 1998; Darlaston-Jones, 2007). Photo elicitation interviews (PEI) were the main method used in this research (Harper, 2002; Pink, 2007).

Themes from the photographs and words were shared as findings in Chapters Five and Six. This chapter provides discussion on the cultural practices as findings using the theory of practice architectures (TPA) (Kemmis, 2022d) and a site ontological approach (Schatzki, 2005). Final conclusions from the research are shared, which includes a practice approach to cultural research, and the significance of new insights from student perspectives for Lutheran education.

7.1   Summary of the research

It has been more than 20 years since research on the culture of Lutheran schools in Australia was conducted by Marks (2000). While this research involved adult participants in Lutheran primary and secondary schools in Queensland, it was noted that student perspectives were not included. From my investigations, no cultural research has been conducted in Lutheran schools in SA, and there is a paucity of cultural research in Australian and international Lutheran schools. This research begins to fill a gap in Lutheran education by forming understandings of the development and influence of school cultural

perspectives for students, staff and parents by using a practice theory perspective, and considers the significance of the informal curriculum in the school. In addition and through the inclusion of practices enacted by staff, students and parents, this research advocates for the inclusion of student perspectives in research in which they are impacted because they are a part of the practices, the site ontology and how the practice arrangements 'hang together'. This research also proposes a cultural framework for consideration in future research in Lutheran and perhaps other faith-based systems of education.

7.2   Design of the research

As a single, ethnographic case study which involved students, staff and parents, the key method used was PEI. As the researcher, I used a reflective journal, and school documents and artefacts in addition to data from photographs and interview transcripts. Through PEI, participants shared what was significant, valued and meaningful for them at this school as shared in the photographs that they took. Stories, memories, experiences and feelings about the school were shared as prompted by their photographs and the interview questions. Values coding (Saldaña, 2016) elicited themes and sub-themes from a variety of data sources. Students, staff and parent PEI provided photographs and captions, with related quotes to illuminate the findings and themes that were shared in the chapter 'photographs and their stories'. The chapter 'words and their meanings' shared findings and themes from remaining data sources. These included the transcript from the principal interview, transcripts from students, staff and parents that were not directly related to the photographs, the researcher reflection journal, and documents and artefacts. In bringing together and further analysing the findings, overarching practices and sub-practices enriched understandings of cultural perspectives.

7.3   Research questions

The research questions were designed to illuminate:

- How students, staff and parents reflect on and describe aspects of their school that they find special

- How students', staff, and parents' reflections and descriptions differ or align

- How students', staff, and parents' reflections and descriptions connect with the vision and mission statements of the school and the Lutheran Church of Australia

- How students', staff, and parents' perspectives interact to reflect the culture/s evident in the school

- Emerging from the research, how the school's culture/s developed and influenced the students, staff and parents.

In considering these research questions, a site ontological lens together with aspects of the TPA that include the sayings, doings and relatings with other terminology related to the practice theory approach were used to suggest interpretations of the findings. A site ontological perspective considers the purpose and happenings of practices with their material arrangements. The TPA builds on this perspective by developing understandings of the practices that exist, how they happen and are shaped or constrained, and their purpose. Practice architectures exist in "cultural-discursive, material-economic and social-political arrangements" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 6). These arrangements are observed through the intersubjective spaces of related cultural "sayings, doings and relatings" (p. 16) of the school. Practices and cultural perspectives are more fully understood through these arrangements and spaces within the school as the site, which are explained in the section that follows through the six main themes as cultural practices.

7.4   Significant outcomes

Cultural perspectives

Research data from the participants' photographs and transcripts, the researcher reflective journal, and documents and artefacts, was analysed and synthesised to illuminate findings and from which themes arose. Six themes emerged from this process and reflect the *practices* held together by the sayings, doings and relatings that connect through community, belonging and Christianity as the key broad arrangements. These *practices* as cultural perspectives for this school, also included achievement, advocacy and agency, through which community and belonging were connected to Christianity. I have arranged these themes in a diagram, as shown in Figure 25.

Figure 25 – Dominant cultural practices from the findings
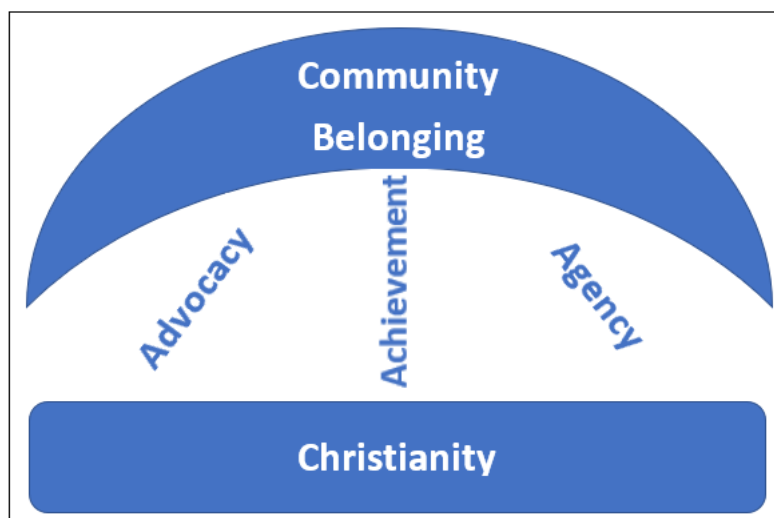
The cultural themes of Christianity, belonging, community are now explained, with advocacy, achievement and agency elaborated upon later.

The significance of Christianity

Christianity is positioned as the base in Figure 25. The practice architectures of Christianity regulate the learning experiences for students and adults through the cultural-discursive,

material-economic and social-political arrangements in place. They operate through a Lutheran lens, meaning that Christian rituals, activities and ways of being in the Lutheran school are informed by the traditions that have evolved from the Lutheran church as the founding organisation for this Lutheran school (Lutheran Church of Australia, 2001; Lutheran Education Australia, 2013, 2016). Lutheran Education Australia (LEA) publications referred to in Chapter Three such as *Growing Deep* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016) and *A Vision for Learners and Learning* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2013), describe and inform staff and leaders of the Lutheran lens which brings a language, actions and relationships that align with Lutheran theology. The school's Lutheran beliefs, traditions and activities are historically bound to its founders and predecessors, which includes the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCA). They are embedded in and underpin Christian education experiences of school worship, devotions and service as they have evolved over time. Using the TPA and a site ontological perspective, it seems that a suffusion-like process over the years has underpinned and embedded Lutheran phenomena through the site of the school, its actions, language, artefacts and relationships. Through the practice architectures of the school, students and staff regularly encounter Christianity through the school's Christian education program, which is also experienced through the practices of advocacy, achievement and agency.

### *The relationship between belonging and community*

There were perspectives on belonging and community that emerged from all data sources, including those provided by the students, staff and parents. In Figure 25, the practices of community and belonging are visually represented by the canopy. While belonging was more dominant for the students and parents, community was stronger for the staff. As the

minor practices for community and belonging surfaced through this research, it was apparent there was a connection between them to explore further.

The research data illuminated this school as a connected community where people developed relationships. These relationships gave them a sense of belonging that some participants described as being family-like. The relationships were perceived as being positive and loving, to the extent that people felt safe, secure, at home and comfortable (Appendix U). The practice architectures as they related to belonging and community involved words that were inclusive and welcoming of people, actions that demonstrated care and support, and relationships that showed each person and family matters in the school.

Figure 26 provides a visual representation of the relationships and connections for the research participants. As relationships permeate all levels and elements of the school and its participants, they are represented by the shaded areas. Parents as the larger cohort of the entire school community, are represented by the larger shape at the top of Figure 26. They connected with members of the school community through volunteer programs, school social functions and events, and school arrivals and departures. Parents saw this school as a large community of people.

Students are represented by the mid-sized shape in the centre of Figure 26 which is likened to their population size when compared to the parents and staff. The students are the connecting group between the parents and staff. As students were present during school days and at some social functions and events, their perspective of this school community was deeper than the parents. While for most it was a place of belonging, two students considered it to be more like a family.
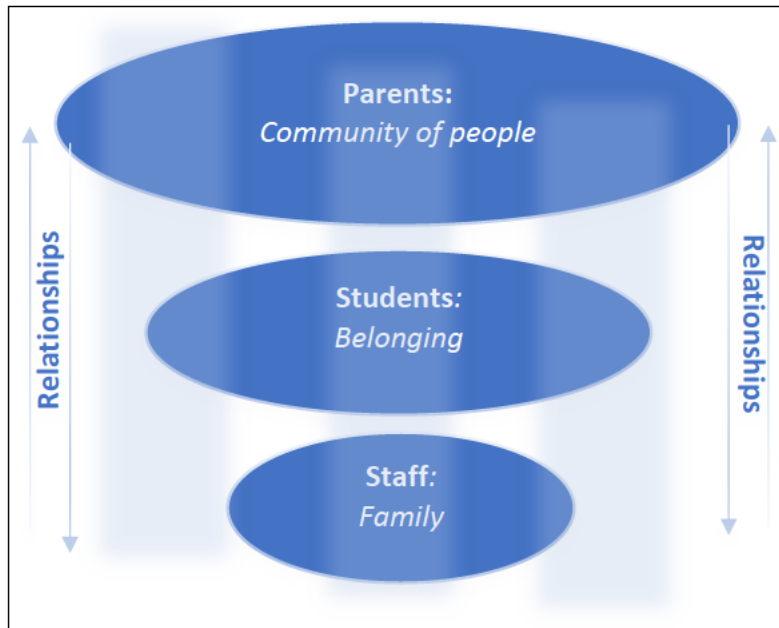
Figure 26 - The school as a connected, Christian community

In Figure 26, the staff shape is smaller than the students because their total numbers in the school community are less than the students. However, the intensity and depth of connection in the staff team is stronger than that of the students and parents. Most of the staff participants shared that this school community was like a family where they had developed strong bonds with colleagues, and felt welcomed and accepted.

The practices of advocacy, agency and achievement are interpreted and understood in some cases differently and in some cases similarly by those enacting the practices (staff, students, parents). The various ways they are enacted link community, belonging and Christianity.

Advocacy

There were perspectives revealed from the adults related to advocacy. Advocacy meant that people spoke favourably and acted in the best interests of the school because they valued the school's relationships, activities and practices. Staff modelled a 'way of being, doing and relating' in the school that was noticed and valued by parents. Parents

appreciated and were protective of the school's values and beliefs because they connected with them and trusted that others would act in the best interests of their children. In advocating for and appreciating the school, some parents involved themselves in the community by investing their skills and time through serving in voluntary programs.

There was a connection between service and advocacy. In Lutheran practice, service is not charity work or driven by desires of individuals. Instead, it is centred on relationships, the Christian faith and love:

> Service is faith active in love. Service involves the selfless giving and loving of others, making a difference in their lives by responding to their needs, and acting without expecting recognition or reward. A Lutheran school challenges students to grow in their understanding that service is not only a personal response to God's love but a broader response as part of one's humanity for the sake of justice for all. (Lutheran Education Australia, 2021)

This service is unconditional (Jennings, 2011). It is intrinsic and embedded culturally in this Lutheran school's educational experiences, which are underpinned by Lutheran beliefs and practices and shape people in the school. In this school, service as informal learning was embedded in 'how people be' and surfaced in their words, actions and through relationships. From a Lutheran perspective, service was a part of the school's holistic experience of Christian education (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016).

The practice architectures of service formed, and taught people associated with this school. The words or language of service, the actions of service and the relationships that develop through serving shaped individuals and the school as a community. The practice architectures contributed to the 'beingness' of individuals and the school community as a group, which I describe as 'how they be'. Through the practice architectures of service, people experience different skills and abilities, relationships, dispositions, and learn what to say to people as they serve.

Students were continually learning how to 'become' or 'who they are becoming' by engaging in practices of play, activities and games at school. They took advantage of different environments in the school where they had affordances, and explored activities such as bargaining, thinking creatively, performing or singing. By experiencing these activities and their associated sayings, doings and relatings, students were being formed as individuals through these practices.

Student and adult perspectives were different

A major outcome of this research as evidenced through the practices, was the difference in perspectives of what makes a school special for the students when compared with the adults. While adult perspectives are dominant in the field of cultural research, children's perspectives are often ignored or dismissed. In this research, student perspectives were concrete and dependent on their environment. They had different words and language because their experiences were different to those of the adults.

When looking at Figure 25, the central practices of achievement and agency were student focused. Christianity and community were adult focused, with belonging being special for both groups. Elaborations on the student practices of achievement and agency are now shared.

Achievement

The perspectives of achievement for the students and adults differed. While literature referencing student achievement often focuses on academic performance and success (Bell & Kent, 2010; Caldwell, 2016; Deng et al., 2020), this was not the case in this research for students. There were no references by students to the Australian Curriculum (Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority, 2010 to present), school assessments or NAPLAN

(National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy)[6] results or tables. Instead, the students shared how their time was best used through their achievements outside of their classroom where they were socialising, being personally challenged and creative and trying new skills. Students spoke of the activities they valued, how they communicate, whether to engage in play or times of solitude and why this was their choice. The school's cultural perspective of achievement was noticed through the actions, relationships and conversations of students.

Agency

As for achievement, there were interesting perspectives on agency. While significant perspectives surfaced from the students, there was little recognition of agency by the adults in this research. Adults may perceive that they are in a position of power and consequently control students' tasks according to the planned curriculum. However, students regularly find opportunities for power, and take control of their learning when they have freedom in their play breaks away from their classroom.

It was clear from this research that students value the control and choices over their lives and their learning. They took photographs of spaces that weren't controlled by teachers in environments where they spent their play breaks, were afforded new opportunities, and could develop skills useful for their future. Students openly expressed their desire to have freedom, agency and play and to experience activities involving collaboration, negotiation, challenges or socialising with peers. As students had agency and the freedom to explore activities, tasks, and skills, they explored who they are to be or their 'becomingness' as

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6 In Australia, NAPLAN is an annual program of assessment for all students in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9 designed to test literacy and numeracy skills for all children as they progress through their schooling. Further information is available at www.nap.edu.au.

individuals. This means they had opportunities to experience the different words, actions and relationships of negotiating practices, collaborating practices and playing practices. Students discovered whether they enjoyed these activities or not, and whether they might be areas to explore further as they find out who they might 'become'.

The differences in perspectives of what makes a school 'special' for adults as opposed to the children is a major outcome of this research. How can we come to understand these differences? In this research, we can see the differences that related to the positions of power of the actors within the school. As students shared what was special and what they valued about the school, it helped adults to understand cultural perspectives through the experiences of students. The students could see, describe and show the practice of agency; they could see, describe and show the practice of achievement. However, the adults were not aware of the students' perspectives. As the cultural perspectives of agency and achievement are visible to students but not adults, it means there is a need for adults to listen, to engage with, and learn from the students.

Belonging

Students' perspectives of achievement and the value and influence of agency for them were significant in growing their sense of belonging in this school. Research evidence shows that for students, a positive sense of belonging in school contributes to their motivation, engagement in learning, commitment to school, and their sense of identity, purpose, and wellbeing (Allen, 2020; de Souza, 2016; Hope, 2012; Osterman, 2000; Towns, 2018). In this research, achievement and agency contributed to the sense of belonging for students at this school. The photographs taken by students around The Big Tree or of the library and

novels revealed opportunities during which they were comfortable in taking time away from peers to relax and 'just be', to give some balance to their life at school.

Socialisation

Socialisation is central to the development of culture (Maccoby, 2014). Socialisation happens in schools as people are initiated into the norms, beliefs, values and expected ways of behaving. This happens through the practice architectures of socialisation that include words, actions and interactions with others. People learn about, take on, and become part of the school's cultural ways or its practice architectures (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018) through events, activities and experiences. These experiences provide opportunities for people associated with the school to grow and strengthen their sense of belonging in the school community as they feel valued, accepted and develop connections with others.

While for the students this cultural transmission was active, there were additional experiences happening. Students engaged in activities and games during their play breaks, where their play was socially enacted, reproduced and transmitted amongst peers (Baines & Blatchford, 2010). With their roles as negotiators, leaders or followers came different responsibilities, actions and words. It seems that through the power of daily play with students who had been at the school for some time, students were initiated into 'how to play' and 'what to say'. Students were engaged in play that was conceptualised as practice, on the ovals or nature play areas. They had their own world of practices with specific rituals, actions, sayings and ways of relating with peers through their games and activities, which were held together within the larger arrangements of the school.

7.5   Revisiting the conceptual framework

This research provides insights on the school's cultural perspectives from students, staff and parents. The underpinning conceptual framework from Chapter Four brought together perceptions of cultural artefacts, beliefs and values and underlying assumptions from Schein (2010), with practice architectures from Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015), together with "practices and material arrangements" proposed by Schatzki (2005, p. 471). The research found an intricate connection amongst these components, as shared by the students, staff and parents, which warrants further consideration.

The revised conceptual framework for this research is shown in Figure 27. The school's practices and material arrangements are central in the framework. They are active in the life of the school and connect Schein's (2010) perspective of culture with the practice architectures that are composed of connected words, actions and relationships amongst people (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015).
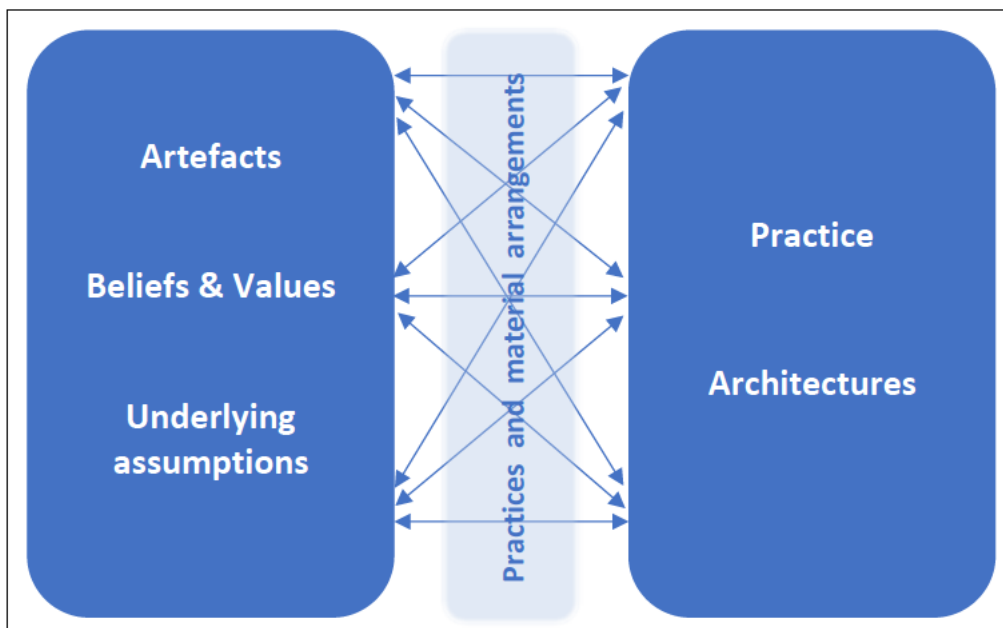

Figure 27 - The revised conceptual framework as an ecology of practices

This framework suggests there might be a better way of perceiving school culture. The school as an organisation is composed of practices and activities that are everywhere. Referred to by Kemmis (2022a) as an "ecology of practices" (p. 124), these practices and their related activities are constantly active as people move around and are present in many spaces. The practices involve language with meaning, happen in spaces with artefacts and resources and exist relationally amongst people (Cooke & Gibbs, 2020). As practices, they consist of smaller components or activities tightly bound together in their respective languages, actions and relationships.

Lutheran education is based on the gospel or the "teachings of Jesus Christ in his public ministry on earth and in the New Testament" (Bartsch, 2013, p. 98). The practices, relationships, and actions of the gospel inform and guide people in this Lutheran school as to its practice architectures in the school community. They are founded on a Lutheran perspective and provide the community with an understanding of 'how we do things here'.

As stated in *Growing Deep* by Lutheran Education Australia (2016):

> The foundation of Lutheran education is the gospel of Jesus Christ [which] informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities. The Lutheran lens identifies key theological concepts that underpin Lutheran education. The lens provides a way of seeing and being in Lutheran education. (p. 7)

This means that the practices, traditions, structures and relationships within the school are founded on the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ. They have evolved and been reproduced from the Lutheran church over time, in what could be referred to as a Lutheran ecology of practices. They are connected to the traditions and history of the Lutheran church through the sayings, doings and relatings or practice architectures (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018) and connected to a range of other practices in the school holding them together.

As an example, Christianity emerged from the findings of this research as a main practice. Holding the Christian practices in place are practice architectures which are guided, informed, and shaped by key people and objects in the school. For example, the practice of whole school worship is guided by its practice architectures. They contain meaningful ideas and ways of talking or thinking, happen in a particular space and time with artefacts and ritualistic actions and activities, and are conducted with respect and inclusivity in the school community as leaders guide communal Christian worship.

To represent the new perspective of culture from this research, Figure 25, Figure 26 and Figure 27 are combined to show the components and relationships in Figure 28.

As explained earlier in this chapter, the practice of Christianity is the foundational base for this school, with the practices of belonging and community in the canopy. These practices are woven together, permeate the school and are wrapped around the school to hold the practice architectures of belonging, Christianity and community in place. While doing this, they also provide stability for the cultural practices of advocacy, achievement and agency in the framework, which connect with belonging, community and Christianity. While many practices may seem invisible, they are experienced by people who are part of the school community.

Shown in the centre are the practices and material arrangements of the school with practice architectures reflective of the school's cultural artefacts, beliefs and values and underlying assumptions. They are not necessarily readily identifiable because they operate harmoniously within the school in what sounds, looks and feels like a connected, Christian community. The people of the school's community are the students, staff and parents.

While the practices and people are shown separately, they are interconnected and exist within the school as part of the whole school community.
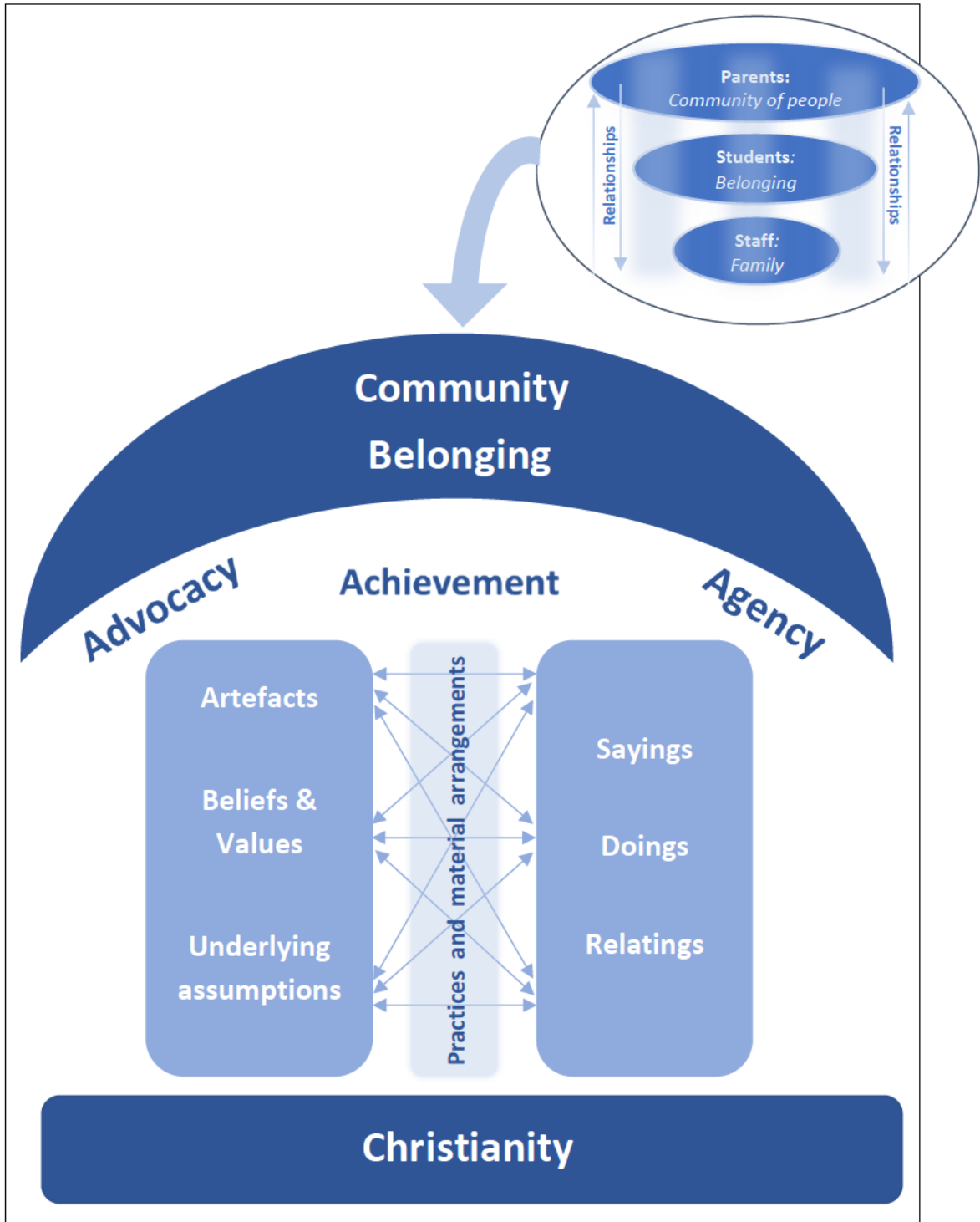
Figure 28 – The new cultural perspective from this research

The cultural practices of advocacy, achievement, agency, belonging, Christianity, and community are infused through the sayings, doings and relatings of students, staff and

parents. Through the intersubjective spaces of practice architectures (Kemmis & Grootenboer, 2008) where practices and material arrangements are influential, these cultural practices shape and socialise people into the beingness or ways of this school and its community.

7.6   Findings from the research

This section highlights the research findings by considering the responses to the overarching and sub-questions. These guided the research which explored the cultural perspectives of one Lutheran primary school in SA.

The overarching question was, *How might community members of one Lutheran primary school in SA shape, and become shaped by, the culture/s of their school?* This question was considered through the five sub-questions that appear below.

Question One: How do students, staff and parents reflect on and describe aspects of their school that they find special?

Findings from the research participants illuminated six main cultural perspectives that emerged as practices for this Lutheran primary school. Presented visually in Figure 24 and Figure 25, the main cultural practices and their related minor practices were:

- Achievement: learning, success.

- Advocacy: appreciation, belief in people, investment, protection, service.

- Agency: freedom, opportunities, play.

- Belonging: beingness, connected, nurtured.

- Christianity: approach, beliefs, Lutheranism, representation, traditions.

- Community: homeliness, relationships.

Question Two: How do the students', staff and parents' reflections and descriptions differ or align?

The main cultural practices for students were achievement and agency. Advocacy and belonging emerged as practices across both the student and adult participant groups. The main parent practices were advocacy and belonging, with achievement, Christianity and community that emerged as minor practices. For staff, the main practices were Christianity and community, with belonging as a minor practice.

While achievement and agency were strongly reflected through the students' responses, the adult perspectives differed from those provided by the students. The connection between the practices of belonging and community was interesting as community was special for the adults, and belonging was special for the students. As I considered these more closely, I found that the practices of belonging and community were similar because they had related meanings and similar minor themes, which indicated that the student version of community was belonging.

Question Three: How do the students', staff and parents' reflections and descriptions connect with the Lutheran school's vision statement and core propositions and Lutheran Education Australia's Growing Deep *framework?*

The school's vision statement (Appendix T) has an emphasis on being 'the school of choice' in the local community through its provision of a Christian education in a relationship-focused environment. The cultural perspectives of belonging, Christianity and community align strongly with the school's vision statement. At the time of this research, the principal was open in sharing that this school was not 'the school of choice' in the region, meaning it was viewed as an aspirational statement.

The school's core propositions (Appendix T) emphasise a connection to God, to local and global communities, growing relationships and partnerships, service and stewardship. These are strongly related to the cultural practices of belonging, Christianity and community, with advocacy having some correlation.

The seven foundation statements of *Growing Deep* (Lutheran Education Australia, 2016) (Figure 5 of Chapter Three) are informed by the Lutheran theological statements shared in Chapter Two. The findings of this research reveal that aspects of each of these statements are illuminated through participants' responses which surface as the six cultural practices. The cultural practices most strongly aligned with the foundation statements include community and Christianity, with advocacy and belonging having some similarities.

Question Four: How do the students', staff and parents' perspectives interact to reflect the culture/s evident in the school?

It was important to include both student and adult perspectives in this research because different insights were shared. Staff provided perspectives on their experiences related to Christianity, relationships, and the school as a connected community. Student perspectives were focused on their experiences outdoors where they had freedom, agency and encountered different activities. It was significant to include the perspectives of students so that a more comprehensive understanding of the school's cultural perspectives could be revealed in relation to the 'beingness' of students and 'who they are becoming'. As learners, students experience the school firsthand. Through PEI, different perspectives were revealed for the students than the adults. Students engage in formal and informal learning, activities and experiences during play breaks, worship and devotions, and embrace the affordances of their various environments. Their experiences of school need

to be included in research so that their cultural perspectives are heard and understood to inform future learning, practice and research.

Question Five: How has the school's culture/s emerging from the research developed and been of influence on the students, staff and parents?

The cultural practices of achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community are embedded in the practice architectures of this school. They influence students, staff and parents through the school's "ecology of practices" (Kemmis & Edwards-Groves, 2018, p. 132). Each practice encompasses a web of words, actions and relationships that people encounter and which are connected through practices and material arrangements (Schatzki, 2005). As a Lutheran school, its beliefs, values and underlying assumptions (Schein, 2010) are underpinned by the theological beliefs of the Lutheran church. This is significant because it shapes the traditions and practices that provide a Christian education. As discussed previously in section 7.5 of this chapter, socialisation shapes people and helps to preserve the school's cultural practices, traditions and 'ways of being'.

In response to the findings from the research, the contributions to knowledge follow.

7.7 Contribution of this research to knowledge

An alternative perspective on culture

This research provides a different perspective on culture to that considered by Schein (2010). Schein proposed a traditional, hierarchical, adult-focused model of organisational culture reliant on one leader of an organisation as the decision maker and head (Mintzberg, 2006) so that culture is object-like or viewed as a 'thing' that can be controlled. In this research, I describe culture through a model that brings Kemmis' work on practice

architectures (Kemmis, 2012, 2022c) and Schatzki's research on practices and material arrangements (Schatzki, 2005, 2006) together with the cultural perspectives of students, staff and parents of this school. The cultural perspectives shared by children and adults in this research included their experiences and feelings, which recognises the interconnected and interrelatedness of "sayings, doings and relatings" (Wilkinson & Kemmis, 2015, p. 348) that become intermingled within culture to form what Kemmis (2022a) describes as an "ecology of practices" (p. 124). This new cultural perspective explained earlier in this chapter, is shown in Figure 28.

School culture

While this research provides insights on the cultural perspectives gathered mostly from students as participants, staff and parents of this Lutheran primary school were also included. Students, as the main participant group, provided perspectives in this research which looked, sounded, and felt different to the adults. Through the inclusion of students in this research, a current and new perspective on school culture is provided which brings the voices of students into the literature, rather than the literature being *about* students.

Socialisation

This research is based upon current understandings of socialisation and its power and influence in the development of culture through socially reproduced experiences (Guimond, 2000; Schein, 2010). These experiences lead to an initiation process, which is an informal process where people learn the cultural approach or way of a school or organisation (Ballano, 2020; Berry, 2014). Socialisation involves people experiencing, understanding, becoming familiar with and engaging with the school's practices and structures as they reflect particular words, actions and relationships referred to as practice

architectures (Kemmis, 2012). In recognising that practice architectures exist at all levels within a school, students and adults in the school community are continually exposed and initiated into the school's ways or approaches.

Lutheran education

Previous Lutheran school cultural research by Marks (2000) was conducted with adults over 20 years ago in Queensland. My doctoral research provides current cultural perspectives, which is significant because it is new for South Australia. It adds to the study by Marks (2000) and fills a gap in literature for Lutheran education in Australia and internationally. As a case study however, the findings of this research are not generalisable to other Lutheran schools but instead provide an indication of the cultural perspectives of this Lutheran school. While the research uncovered new perspectives, it also involved the voices of students for the first time in Lutheran school cultural research. In addition, my cultural research has the potential to contribute to literature for Catholic, Independent and faith-based schools in Australia and internationally.

Photo elicitation interviews

This research engaged children from seven to twelve years of age in the method of PEI. It contributes to the literature on this method and its suitability for primary school-aged children. The photographs as prompts, provided in-depth descriptions of experiences, activities and the meanings that children associated with their photographs so they could show a version of their school life that was different to the adults, and of which the adults seemed unaware. In addition, it contributes to the literature on PEI with adults because of their involvement in this research.

In considering the contribution of this research to knowledge, recommendations for further research are now proposed.

7.8   Recommendations for further research

Significant time has passed since research on the culture of Lutheran schools was conducted in Queensland Lutheran primary and secondary schools involving adults by Marks (2000). In addition, Australian and international doctoral research on Lutheran school culture research is difficult to locate. Previous Lutheran school cultural research has not included the voices and perspectives of students.

This cultural research in a Lutheran primary school in South Australia is new and provides a fresh perspective on culture through the lens of practice architectures. The potential for further research to be conducted as an extension to this research and the findings are exciting. The gaps to fill are now discussed.

Australian Lutheran school cultural research

National research on the cultural perspectives of students and adults in Australian Lutheran primary and secondary schools is recommended to illuminate and affirm, extend or dispute the findings of this current research through the lens of practice architectures. This may involve similar research being conducted in the Lutheran Education Queensland (LEQ) and Lutheran Education Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania (LEVNT) regions, as well as being extended into other Lutheran schools in the Lutheran Education South Australia, Northern Territory and Western Australia (LESNW) region. Findings of the practices could be considered with LEA's documents, policies, traditions and formation programs. In addition, findings could be viewed across Lutheran schools so that strengths and areas for

development in Lutheran education can be recognised, analysed, actioned and shared as appropriate.

International Lutheran school cultural research

My review of the literature identified limited focus on cultural research in Australia and internationally. I would encourage other researchers to consider using a similar model of research, with a particular focus on student voice to explore the practices, material arrangements and practice architectures in Lutheran schools. This would provide an excellent opportunity to illuminate the role of Lutheran theology, the vision for Lutheran education, and practices and/or specific contextual conditions across Lutheran schools worldwide.

Parent and new staff perspectives in Lutheran school cultural research

As illuminated through my research, Lutheran school parents have valuable and important perspectives on the cultural practices and 'feel' of a school that need to be understood. As 'outsiders', they are removed from the day-to-day practices, material arrangements and practice architectures of schools, yet bring perspectives of Lutheran schools and other education sectors and systems as 'insiders' because of their regular presence at the school (Kemmis, 2022d; Schlechty, 2009). For the Lutheran, and other education sectors, there is opportunity for valuable research to be conducted with parents from different schools, sectors and systems to more fully understand the influence of a school's cultural practices on parents, families and the school community.

From experiences in my regional office role, I am aware of insights to be heard and understood from staff new to the Lutheran education system, who are 'outsiders' becoming 'insiders'. New staff have understandings and perspectives of the practice

architectures and their interplay with the practices and material arrangements of the school as the site, which are different, noticed and significant for them when entering a Lutheran school community.

Conducting research with parents and staff new to the Lutheran school system will illuminate practices as findings that help leaders understand the dominant and significant practices of their school, the influences they have on people inside and outside the school, and which ones are important to nurture and grow.

Cultural research in other systems and sectors

While some school cultural research exists in other systems and sectors, little has been conducted in the past five years and even less that engaged the voices of primary school students. With this gap in cultural research, further research is needed that engages the perspectives of primary school students across all school systems and sectors. It would provide opportunities for strengths and differences to be uncovered and celebrated, improvements addressed, and provide opportunity for students as agents to consider pathways forward for learning pathways.

Photo elicitation interview research

There is potential for qualitative research that uses PEI with adults and children to be replicated more broadly in society. PEI supports Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989), as it is a method which enables adults to hear the perspectives and voices of young people.

Currently, adults and especially children are very comfortable and familiar in using digital devices, their applications and capturing images. My experience was that PEI was a natural way to involve students and adults in qualitative research. It provided opportunities for

relaxed conversations that focused on photographs rather than the individual, which helped participants feel at ease and comfortable in explaining their ideas. Children have knowledge and insights that we, as adults, need to listen to and hear. Although the words and language children use may be different, their perspectives and interpretations of their world are significant.

7.9   Final reflections

For the first time, this research included student perspectives in an exploration of the cultural perspectives of one Lutheran primary school in South Australia, which illuminated six cultural practices through photo elicitation interviews (PEI). The research was based on a very small representation of students and staff in the context of the national Lutheran education system. It was significant for student voices to be accessed and heard in addition to the adult voices, because this research provides a fresh look at school culture and includes student perspectives that are missed by adults.

While I have had several opportunities to begin sharing the research findings at conferences and presentations, two were significant. One presentation was with the staff at the research school. Staff connected with the sense of belonging from students, the significance of informal learning practices during play breaks, and the impact of different learning experiences for students through the practices of performing, cooking and gardening. Staff were surprised at the relationship between student belonging, achievement and motivation. They were intrigued by the practice of bartering developed by children in the nature play area and the students' connections with The Big Tree. Staff recognised that a repeat of the research may illuminate findings that might be the same, or less significant. However, other findings may now surface due to the influence of the

COVID-19 pandemic[7] on the school and its community in the past four years. Staff shared concerns about the impact of restrictions on the school's community events for volunteers, parents and families in response to the South Australian Government's Major Emergency Declaration (Government of South Australia, 2022). Historically, the school's practice of hosting community events has been a positive highlight for parents and their families, students and staff as they connect socially and build relationships. In response to the research findings, staff discussions generated significant conversations, provocations and ideas for the reinvigoration and action of some community events.

A second significant experience to share research findings was in July 2022 at the Australian Conference of Lutheran Education in Melbourne. Australian Lutheran school and Early Childhood Services leaders and staff attended this conference in person or online. Delegates attending my presentation were surprised at the different perspectives illuminated by students when compared to adults, which included the practices of achievement and agency. In addition, they were interested in the activities and practices of the students during play breaks away from the traditional classroom that contributed to their sense of belonging, which provoked interesting post-presentation discussions.

The revised conceptual framework for this research (Figure 27) combines the work of Schein (2010), Schatzki (2005), and Wilkinson and Kemmis (2015). This framework acknowledges the interconnectedness of the school's practices with associated material arrangements perceived by students and adults (what is happening here), with the sayings,

7 Coronavirus disease was declared a worldwide pandemic on 11 March 2020 by the World Health Organisation. World Health Organization. (2022). *Emergencies*. https://www.who.int/europe/emergencies/situations/covid-19.

doings and relatings of the school's cultural artefacts, beliefs and values and underlying assumptions (why things happen this way). The image of this framework (Figure 27), the school as a connected community (Figure 26), and the dominant cultural practices from the findings (Figure 25) are brought together to reveal a new image and cultural perspective of this school from the research (Figure 28). As explained by Kemmis (2022a), the interconnected and interrelated nature of these practices as 'happenings' evolves as a system into an "ecology of practices" (p. 124), where new practices may emerge.

How does this apply to the students in this school? The ecology of practices in relation to culture enables student voice to be included through the practice architectures or sayings, doings and relatings of practices and material arrangements. Students are part of the practices in schools. In this research, they are part of the practices of this Lutheran school. I suggest that practice theory may be a useful or better way to look at culture, rather than the traditional 'top down' approach of government and institutional policy, control and curriculum mandates, or a 'bottom up' approach determined by school leaders and teachers (Poon et al., 2017), which leaves students out. The theory of practice architectures includes children. It brings the 'top down' together with the 'bottom up', to see, hear and notice what the children are saying, doing and how they relate with others.

The photograph of The Big Tree (Figure 29) is not unlike the new cultural perspective developed from this research (Figure 28). The Big Tree is significant. It has deep, historical roots and a strong trunk likened to the traditions of this school from the Lutheran church, which goes back in time and history to the work of Martin Luther and the beginnings of Lutheran theology. The branches, leaves and new shoots of The Big Tree represent the children as they are shaped by the conditions and practices of the school. The children have

space for freedom to be where they can create their own practices through their games, activities and markets. The practices include the moment-by-moment actions and activities that allow for the possibility of change. They give children their connectedness and space where they can be who they are to be.

Figure 29 - The Big Tree

Kemmis & Grootenboer (2008) used the infinity symbol (∞) to represent the idea that practices evolve over time and through generations between the practices of people and the regulatory practice architectures of the context. The infinity symbol is also applicable at this point, as it represents the fluidity and dynamism of future cultural research that may develop from my proposed and revised cultural framework. I look forward to learning about future cultural research, the impact of my research moving forwards, and further developments that others suggest regarding the proposed revised cultural framework that is an outcome of this research.

Most importantly, I have been and will continue to advocate for the inclusion of students' voices when decisions or experiences affecting them are being considered by adults. The

words of Judge Becroft (2018) as the Children's Commissioner in New Zealand, are powerful:

> Children and young people are the experts on their own experiences. Hearing and incorporating their views delivers better and more robust decisions. It also confirms and develops their capacity to act independently, make their own choices and actively participate … Hearing children's voices in education is essential. Few things affect children's lives more than their educational experiences. (pp. v-viii)

A final word. Not from me as researcher, but from a nine-year old student at the school where the research was conducted, sharing their cultural perspective of their school. When asked what they thought new children coming to this school should know about what is special at this school, this was the student's response:

> *It's a connected School … it's a Lutheran School and they're welcome. They're connected in the School once they join. And we're really happy for them to join … when you go to a new school you're like – I don't know anyone. What will they think of me? But if you welcome them with an open heart and just act like you've known them forever, and you just start - like,* Hello – let me show you around – *they'll feel welcome, that that's their school – I'm happy here! (Student 16)*

Appendix A Flinders University ethics approval

Content removed

for privacy reasons.

Appendix B Ethics information sheet

Content removed

for privacy reasons.

Content removed

for privacy reasons.

Appendix C LEA research approval

Content removed

for privacy reasons.

Appendix D LSA research approval

Content removed

for privacy reasons.

Appendix E School contact time

Table of school contact visits showing purposes of visits, dates, and approximate hours.

Purpose of visit	Dates	Hours
Initial meeting, paperwork, observation	15 May - Monday	2
Observational days	26 May - Friday	7 ½
	29 May - Monday	5 ½
	30 May – Tuesday	½
	7 June – Wednesday	7
Staff photo elicitation interviews	13 June – Tuesday	7 ½
Staff photo elicitation interviews and Principal interview	14 June – Wednesday	6 ½
Staff photo elicitation interviews and completion of Principal interview	19 June – Monday	4
Parent photo elicitation interviews	27 June – Tuesday	6
	28 June - Wednesday	6
Student photo elicitation interviews	3 August – Thursday	6
	8 August – Tuesday	4
	9 August - Wednesday	4
	11 August – Friday	4
TOTALS	**14 days**	**70 ½**

Appendix F Question guide

- Find a suitable place for the introductory chat
- Check paperwork – adult and student written consent
- Introduce myself to the participant.
- Thank them for participating

Clarify that:

- involvement is voluntary
- they can withdraw from the task at any time
- check that adult consent (student assent) to the interview being audio recorded
- check understanding of appropriate photos
- Demographic data (Eg. Age group, year level, birth country, years at school, previous schools, denomination).
- Any clarifying questions now? Ask anything as we go.

Briefing on the TASK:

Using this digital device, please take some photographs to show what is special for you at this school. I'll wander around with you but stay out of your way.

Once you have taken enough images – which could be 5, 10 or more photos – we'll find a quiet area to look at your photos and talk about them.

May need to show how the digital device is use.

Time for clarifying questions to be asked.

> Using this iPad, please take some photographs to show what is special for you in this school.

Phase 2 DURING PHOTOGRAPHS: Doing the task

Provide a written copy of the task:

- Inform them that audio recording will begin.
- Walk with and follow the participants.
- Don't interfere.

- Find a place to sit and talk about the photos captured
- Can you please show me the photos you took? And give them a name as we go. (Time for this)
- Take a few minutes. Which ones are your top 3, 4 or 5 photos?

Once photos are chosen, these are the types of questions to ask around each top photo:
Please tell me about this photo (eg. What is special for you? Why? What else can you tell me? That's interesting … Tell me more about … I'd like to hear more about …)

Phase 4 OTHER Interview questions

- If a new family was going to start at this School next week, what do you think would be special for them to know about this School? (Why is that / what does that mean? Tell me more…)
- This School might be different to other schools in the area? What do you think? (Why / Tell me more …)
- Do you think that this School shapes or changes people who come here? How? In what ways? How do you think this school has shaped or changed you?
- Is there anything else you'd like to share?

THANK YOU for being part of this research. I'll turn the audio pen off now.

Appendix G Documents and artefacts accessed

Public documents (PD), online material (OM), and visuals (art) gathered from the school.

Item No.	Type of material	Source and word count	Date	Audience	How shared?
	Public Documents				
PD1	Enrolment application	Secondary source; 580 words	2017	Prospective families	Distributed via request and open mornings, with PD2 and PD9 for enquiring families/friends.
PD2	Enrolment handbook	Secondary source; 5000 words	2017	Prospective families	Distributed via request and open mornings, with PD1 and PD9 for enquiring families/friends.
PD3	Flyer: Open morning	Secondary source; 160 words	2017	Current and prospective families in community	Broadly with newsletter, and collectable at the front office.
PD4	Flyer: Rhythm kids	Secondary source; 30 words	2017	Pre-school aged children - current and new families	Given to families with younger siblings and at church.
PD5	Flyer: Story time	Secondary source; 30 words	2017	Pre-school aged children - current and new families	Given to families with younger siblings and at church.
PD6	School name insights	Secondary; 2000 words	2015	Community	Provided to all school families and staff.
PD7	Newsletter	Secondary 2000 words	2017	School families and community	Provided to all school families and staff.
PD8	Parent Handbook	Secondary 6000 words	2017	School families	Provided to all school families.
PD9	Prospectus	Secondary 4700 words	2015	Prospective families	Distributed via request and open mornings, with PD1 and PD2 for enquiring families/friends.
PD10	School map	Primary 100 words	2017	New people to site	Given to people new to the school site on arrival via front office.
	Online material				
OM1	Web page	Secondary	2017	The public, current and prospective families, friends.	Digitally available, so interested parties search and find.
OM2	Facebook	Secondary	2017	The public, current and prospective families, friends.	Digitally available, so interested parties search and find.
	Visuals				
Art1	Researcher photographs	Primary; 43 photographs	2017	Researcher	N/A.

Appendix H Student 2 - captioned and ordered photographs

Student 2

1. Oval	3. Shops	5. Others: Flags
2. Bottom Oval	4. Drums	6. Cross

Appendix I Transcript coding trials

Process Coding as Trial 1

Each line was coded with words that ended in '-ing' to generate a story from the actions shown in the First cycle of Figure 1. Playing, reading or eating, and conceptual actions such as discussing, surviving or settling were examples of process codes.

After First cycle coding, two options were considered. Option 1 shown in Figure 1 involved grouping like processes together to identify patterns that tell a story. Option 2 in Figure 1 involved grouping the codes according to the sayings, doings and relatings. Thinkings and

173.	talking about it	235.	having the time
174.	child having a problem	236.	coming in to help
175.	sharing observations	237.	feeling I live here some days
176.	teacher helping child	238.	often doing something
177.	hearing it often	239.	volunteering and parents helping
178.	working at it	240.	people wanting to help
179.	protecting it	241.	working weird hours
180.	appreciating it	242.	doing what they can
181.	being reminded to be grateful	243.	wanting to be here
	thers	244.	caring for it
First cycle	mazing	245.	like watering and fertilising a plant

Undercroft photo:	Events	*allow*	Actions	*with/by*	People	*enhancing*	Community
Stage photo:	Events	*provide*	Actions	*with/for/by*	People	*which have*	Meaning
Entry photo:	School search	*allows*	Interactions	*providing*	Connections	*with*	Community
Entry photo:	Enter	*and see*	Helping	*that shows*	Love/value	*so we are*	Protective of it
Garden photo:	Garden produce	*as we*	Grow and pick	*then*	Prepare	*and then*	Serve others
Option 1	oving school	*hearing*	Positive talk	*agree it*	Feels right

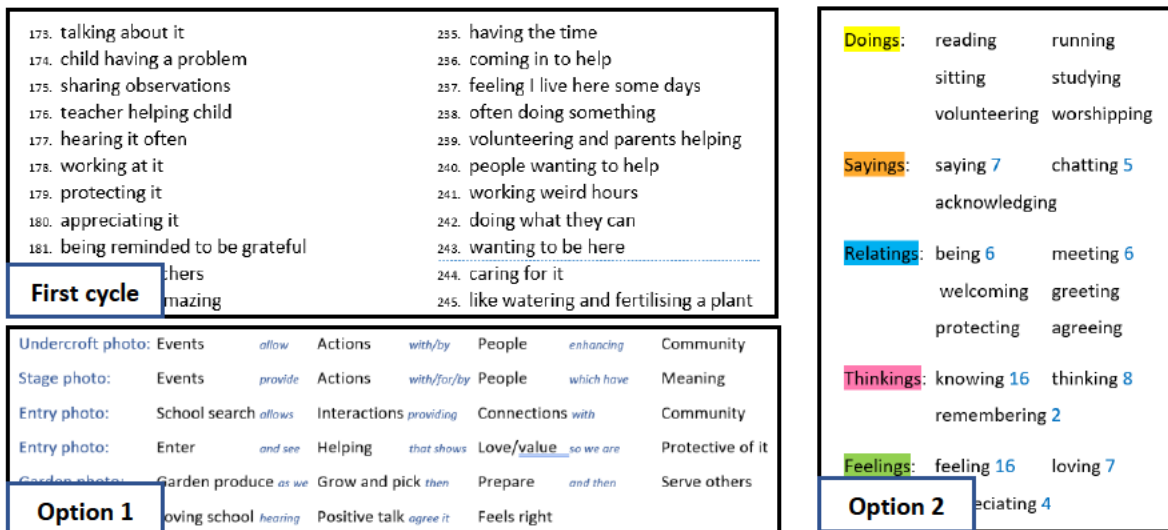| **Doings:**	reading	running
	sitting	studying
	volunteering	worshipping
Sayings:	saying 7	chatting 5
	acknowledging	
Relatings:	being 6	meeting 6
	welcoming	greeting
	protecting	agreeing
Thinkings:	knowing 16	thinking 8
	remembering 2	
Feelings:	feeling 16	loving 7
Option 2	eciating 4	

Figure 1 - Process Coding showing First cycle, Option 1 and Option 2

feelings were added to these groups as they were dominant in the coding. However, ambiguities existed that meant adjustments were required to give a more accurate story. While this was feasible, it did not feel like the best approach because actions were the focus of process coding, rather than beliefs and values which were central to the conceptual framework for this research. Therefore, another coding option was trialled.

Values Coding as Trial 2

The second approach trialled was Values Coding. Value codes include what is important or held in high regard for the participant. Attitude codes identify the thoughts or feelings of the participant. Belief codes are statements or understandings about a situation or context. Ultimately, Values Coding brings together individual and groups of participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs.

The same transcript used in the Process Coding trial was used for the Values Coding trial. Labels helped identify individual codes. The transcript of a parent (P3) produced value codes from V1 to V46, attitude codes from A1 to A45, and belief codes from B1 to B55. A sample of belief codes is shown in sections A, B, and C of Figure 2. Photographic labels

Veggie Garden:
B45 Cooking happens in the kitchen
B46 Everyone's aware the Cross is there
B47 Food is a basic need
B48 God takes care of our needs
B49 There are different Graces
... *needs are met*
A

End:
B50 Many people love the School
B51 The talk is different about this School.
... *this School is unique and loved*
B

B41 Teachers and the Principal are the key people in this School
B42 Teachers and the Principal help raise our kids
B43 The Principal looks after the staff
B44 The Principal and teachers hold the whole feel of the School
... *this School is good and has a unique feel*
... *people are positive about this School*
... *people like this School and want to be present*
... *teachers and the Principal are the key people in this School*
C

For this parent, people and community are core to this School – particularly the teachers and Principal: '... they'd (teachers and Principal) be the main ones that hold the whole feel of the school'. The care for others is highly valued. This is supported by the positive talk and feel of this School: '... this is a good place; it feels right.' This parent holds a grateful attitude in being part of this School and community: '... we're all so grateful for it (the feel of the School) – that we want to look after it and protect it.'
D

Figure 2 - Values coding of a parent transcript with a related photograph

grouped the codes with their photograph so that summary phrases for each group were developed. A sample of these summary phrases is shown in the blue text in sections A, B, and C of Figure 2. The summary paragraph in section D combines the summary phrases in a narrative style that synthesises this parent's perspective of the school. Values Coding seemed to align more closely to the conceptual framework and research questions for this research.

Appendix J Student 2 - values coding from transcript

VALUES: Student 2 values:	BELIEFS: Student 2 accepts or knows ....
Introduction / taking photos / ordering photos:	**Introduction / taking photos / ordering photos:**
V0 – being the fastest in my age group	B1 – I was the fastest kid in my age group
V1 – the flags	B2 – we're not allowed to run on the playground
V2 – knowing where my class is	B3 – it's not safe to run on the playground
V3 – running on the oval	B4 – I got told off cos we were running on the
V4 – running	playground
V5 – running	B5 – I have my own Play Station
V6 – the chance to be a Captain	B6 – my class will be at the Library
V7 – rules	B7 – that playground is for Year 4 to 7s
V8 – soccer wall	*... we are not to run on the playground*
V9 – the cross	
V10 – the dramas	**Drums:**
V11 – the band that plays	–
V12 – playing cricket	**Oval:**
V13 – dislikes silly cricket play	B8 – we buy things with red rocks
V14 – drums	B9 – little towns are not like busy cities
... running	B10 – busy cities have lots of cars and traffic jams
... activities	B11 – little towns have normal roads
... objects	**Bottom oval:**
... playing as a group	B12 – I did 367 push ups yesterday
	... little towns are less busy than cities
Drums:	
V15 – drums being played	**New student:**
V16 – drums	B12a – this is a nice school
Oval:	B13 – the teachers are really nice
V17 – playing sports	B14 – this is a Christian school
Shops:	B15 – being Christian means they believe in God
V18 – setting up the shops	B16 – Lutherans believe in God
Bottom oval:	B17 – Martin Luther made up the Lutheran church
V19 – collecting rocks	school
... drums being played	B18 – Worship and Praise is Friday at the start of the
... playing	day
New student:	B19 – every class goes to Worship and Praise
V20 – spending time with a new student	*... the school and teachers are nice*
V21 – having things to play with	*... being a Christian school means believing in God*
V22 – having space to play in	*... Lutheran schools believe in God*
V23 – being on stage	*... every class goes to Worship and Praise Friday*
... playing	*mornings*
ATTITUDES: Student 2 thinks or feels	
Introduction / taking photos / ordering photos:	A6 – annoyed that people crushed rocks
A1 – enjoyment from running	A7 – enjoys setting up shop things
A2 – concerned about the rules when we don't have	A8 – calm in a little town
Year 7s	
Drums:	**Bottom oval:**
A3 – calmed by drumming	A9 – likes walking over the bridge
Oval:	A9a – challenges are good
A4 – enjoyment from playing sport	**New student:**
A4a – energetic and happy when playing sports I like	A10 – appreciative of stuff here
Shops:	*... enjoyment from activities and objects*
A5 – enjoyment from shops	*... calm and happy*

Key focus *(documented immediately following the interview)*: **PLAYING**

TRANSCRIPTS: **S2 main key word:** *PLAYING*
VAB key themes: PLAYING – ENJOYMENT – CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
S2 – Values key theme: PLAYING
… running
… activities
… objects
… playing as a group
… drums being played
… playing
… playing

S2 – Attitudes key theme: ENJOYMENT
… enjoyment from activities and objects
… calm and happy

S2 – Beliefs key theme: CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
… we are not to run on the playground
… little towns are less busy than cities
… the school and teachers are nice
… being a Christian school means believing in God
… Lutheran schools believe in God
… every class goes to Worship and Praise Friday mornings

Student 2 – Values coding from Researcher Field Notes and Interview Reflections:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
Va – Playing games	*Aa - keen*	*Ba – this school is Lutheran*
Vb – activities		*Bb – this school has a connection to God*
Vc – being in the playground		

In summary *(this incorporates summary VAB phrases from transcripts, field notes and reflections):*
S2 identifies running and playing as activities that are important to him/her at this school. Playing can happen on the playground or the oval and may involve different objects. S2 enjoys these and other activities and is keen to be involved. S2 is aware that this school is Christian; this means the people believe in God. The school and teachers are nice.

*Following are the summary VAB phrases [**VALUES, ATTITUDES** and **BELIEFS**] from the INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT. It shows how key ideas/concepts were identified for the summary*

S2 Value phrases:	**S2 Attitude Phrases:**	**S2 Belief phrases:**
… running	… enjoyment from	… we are not to run on the playground
… activities	activities and objects	… little towns are less busy than cities
… objects	… calm and happy	… the school and teachers are nice
… playing as a group		… being a Christian school means believing in God
… drums being played		… Lutheran schools believe in God
… playing		… every class goes to Worship and Praise Friday mornings
… playing		

RESEARCHER'S FIELD NOTES AND INTERVIEW REFLECTIONS FOR S2:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
Va – Playing games	Aa - keen	Ba – this school is Lutheran
Vb – activities		Bb – this school has a connection to God
Vc – being in the playground		

Written paragraph - summary *(this incorporates summary codes from transcripts, field notes and reflections):*

S2 identifies running and playing as activities that are important to him/her at this school. Playing can happen on the playground or the oval and may involve different objects. S2 enjoys these and other activities and is keen to be involved. S2 is aware that this school is Christian; this means the people believe in God. The school and teachers are nice.

Written paragraph - S2's perspective:

I enjoy running on the oval as I'm very fast. Being part of a group or sports team is important to me; it gives me energy and makes me happy to play. There are rules and ways of playing that should be followed so games are fair and sensible; I get annoyed when others spoil this play. There are lots of activities and playing spaces or areas at this school. I enjoy helping set up games and activities, and then playing. This is a nice Christian school with nice teachers. We go to worship every Friday morning.

Written paragraph - researcher's interpretation *… the whys of S2's perspective:*

S2 values acceptance, being challenged and ultimately successful in these challenges. S2 likes to be noticed. Boundaries are important for fair and sensible play. S2 finds activities energising which result in feeling happy and content, and then followed by a calmness. S2 is comfortable here and accepted by others.

Appendix K Staff Member 2 summary document

SM2: Staff Member 2 – Values coding from Interview Transcript

VALUES: This Staff Member values ….

Intro
V1 – experiencing an established school
V2 – first impressions
V3 – grounds looked after
V4 – first impressions
V5 – welcoming front office area
V6 – being part of a team
V7 – staff room
V8 – coherent staff team
V9 –kitchen garden program
V10 – students involved in cooking and growing food
V11 – Library and reading
V12 – different play areas
V13 – this school's country feel
V14 – W&P area
V15 – worship time
V16 – bringing the whole school together
V17 – community feel
V18 – my classroom
V19 – children playing together
V20 – having a well-being person
… first impressions
… being part of a team
… the programs and play for children
… togetherness
… worship time
… the country, community feel
First impressions
V21 – aesthetic grounds
V22 – well kept garden
V23 – country-type feel
V24 – natural environment
… well kept grounds
… country feel
Staff room
V25 – staff room
V26 – cohesive, connected staff
V27 – inviting nature of all staff
V28 – bringing people together
… togetherness of staff
… inviting staff
Front office
V29 – front office staff
V30 – friendly welcoming front office people
V31 – being helped
V32 – front office people
… the welcoming front office staff
… friendly and helpful people

Garden program
V33 – kitchen garden program
V34 – student involvement in the garden process
V35 – promoting healthy living
V36 – students can influence family habits
… students involved in the garden program
Library
V37 – love for reading
V38 – usable, accessible Library
V39 – Librarian's support
V40 – Librarian involvement in student learning
… supportive Librarian
… an accessible Library
Nature play
V41 – nature play
V42 – play options for children
V43 – natural environment
… natural environment for play
Worship area
V44 – people coming together
V45 – worshipping God
V46 – social connection for people
V47 – the cross
V48 – live music at worship
… social connection for people
… worship time
Classroom
V49 – my classroom
V50 – my students
V51 – us owning the classroom space
V52 – students owning their class spaces
V53 – students having choices
V54 – reading time
V55 – the altar
V56 – students owning displays
V57 – children get their own Bible
… student ownership of class space
… students choose displays
Oval
V58 – play spaces and options
V59 – student playtime options
… play options for students

Mission and vision
V60 – school identity
V61 – the cross
V62 – learning about God
V63 – connection
V64 – community
V65 – partnerships
… connection
… Christianity

Well-being
V66 – well-being support

Wrap up
V67 – my classroom
V68 – classes involved with worship
V69 – student ownership
V70 – welcoming, country feel
V71 – environmental space and surrounds
… student choice and involvement
… country surrounds
V72 – good staff communication
V73 – staff morale
V74 – role clarity
V75 – respect for teacher workload
V76 – leadership support
V77 – principal is visual and interacting
V78 – leadership support
V79 – social times with staff
V80 – staff being supported
… staff morale and socialising
… leadership support
… supported staff
V81 – parental support
V82 – parental involvement
V83 – school's curriculum and philosophy
V84 – students investigating
V84 – connecting with others
V86 – teachers and students working together
V87 – hands on learning
V88 – welcoming environment
… parental support and involvement
… students learn by investigation
… working with others

ATTITUDES: Staff Member 2 thinks or feels ….

Intro			Nature play	Well-being	A34 – valued
A1 – at home	A11 – comfortable	A16 – welcomed	A22 – encouraged	A29 – supported	A35 – welcomed
A2 – impressed	A12 – connected	A17 – supported	**Classroom**	*… encouraged*	A36 – accepted
A3 – tranquil	A13 – supported	**Front office**	A23 – passionate	*… involved*	A37 – open
A4 – welcomed	*… connected*	A18 – supported	A24 – comfortable	*… passionate*	minded
A5 – connected	*… impressed*	A19 – assisted	A25 – open	*… thoughtful*	A38 – welcoming
A6 – trust	*… comfortable*	**Library**	minded	**Wrap up**	A39 – cared for
A7 – impressed	*… assisted*	A20 – passionate	A26 – thoughtful	A30 – peaceful	*… cared for*
A8 – passionate	**First impressions**	(about reading)	**Mission and vision**	A31 – challenged	*… respected*
A9 –	A14 – impacted	A21 – supported	A27 – involved	A32 - respected	*… welcomed*
inconvenienced	(by aesthetics)	*… welcomed*	A28 – connected	A33 – cared for	
A10 – appreciative	**Staff room**	*… supported*			
	A15 – connected				

BELIEFS: Staff Member 2 accepts or knows ….

Intro
B1 – trees make an area beautiful
B2 – first impressions are important
B3 – front office staff are welcoming
B4 – being part of a team is key
B5 – teaching can be stressful
B6 – the students have many play options
B7 – nature play involves rocks, shops, carving and building
B8 – our W&P area brings community together
… student play options are many
… front office staff make a good first impression
… team and community are key
B9 – worship is a key part of our school
B10 – play areas are scenic
B11 – the big oval is for all
B12 – our school name was confused
B13 – the well-being person is valued
… outdoor play is scenic

First impressions
B14 – first impressions count
B15 – this place has a nice feel
B16 – the grounds are cared for
… there is a nice feel here
… the grounds are cared for

Staff room
B17 – the staff are essential for teachers
B18 – teachers work long hours here
B19 – teachers need to enjoy working with people
B20 – leadership and the staff team need to be strong
B21 – all staff need to be inviting
B22 – staff togetherness sets you up
B23 – staff collegiality is key
… staff collegiality is valued
… staff are inviting and connected

Front office
B24 – the front office promotes our school and staff
B25 – the front office is the hub
B26 – the front office staff make a difference
B27 – the front office staff are vital in a school community
… front office staff advocate for our school
… the front office staff are key

Garden
B28 – kitchen garden program is valuable learning
B29 – the kitchen garden program promotes healthy living
B30 – students influence home
… learning and healthy living are promoted through the kitchen garden program

Library
B31 – reading's part of everything we do
B32 – reading skills are key
B33 – a used, accessible Library is needed
B34 – the Librarian supports us
B35 – kids access the Library at Recess
B36 – the Librarian's involved in our learning
… reading skills are necessary
… the Library is accessible
… the Librarian supports students

Nature play
B37 – nature play is great for junior school
B38 – basic playgrounds have metal structures
B39 – kids are creative in the natural environment
B40 – rules enable safe play
B41 – nature play allows creativity
… nature play allows kids to be creative

Worship area
B42 – the worship area gets people together
B43 – worshipping God is key
B44 – all our community events occur in the worship area
B45 – involving parents makes them feel part of the community
B46 – live worship music involves people
… the worship area brings community together
… we worship God and have live music

Classroom
B47 – I'm here for my students
B48 – these classrooms are old
B49 – the classroom should be a nice place to be
B50 – students set up their classroom
B51 – the altar is an important space
B52 – whole school reading happens each morning
B53 – students make their room their own
B54 – the cross is standard on altars
B55 – students get their own Bible in Junior School
B56 – the Bibles stay at school with the students
B57 – the Bible's used throughout their schooling
… students are given Bibles for school
… the altar has a cross
… students make the classroom their own

Oval
B58 – sporty kids use the big oval
B59 – students are offered options for activities each lunch
B60 – problems happen when kids are bored
… students choose lunchtime activities

Mission and vision
B61 – common identity means we're on the same page
B62 – the cross for Lutheran schools is significant

B63 – the cross means we value God
B64 – we learn about God here
B65 – we value God
B66 – Christianity is integral to our curriculum
B67 – the love heart means caring
B68 – leadership change has created a community feel
B69 – the caring factor here has strengthened
B70 – our community feel shows we're welcoming
B71 – we are a connected school
… the cross is significant and has meaning
… we learn about Christianity here
… there is a community feel here
… we are caring, welcoming and connected
Well-being
B72 – students today have lots of issues
B73 – students are exhausted
B74 – the well-being person helps students
… the well-being person provides needed student support
Wrap up
B75 – my time is spent in the classroom
B76 – all the staff influence how the school operates
B77 – whole school worship happens weekly
B78 – engagement increases when students are involved in worship
B79 – students tune in to worship when their friends are involved
B80 – I feel at home with the welcoming country feel
B81 – the country feel is a vibe
B82 – nature gives me peace
B83 – people become set in their ways after a while
B84 – leadership, communication and morale are valued
… the country feel is welcoming
… communication and leadership grow staff morale
… staff have a say in school operations

B85 – good communication influences staff morale
B86 – staff morale lifts when staff are involved in decisions
B87 – report writing time is important
… student involvement in worship increases engagement
B88 – learning plans fall away if not followed up
B89 – leadership sets aside time for socialising
B90 – social times make it more welcoming
B91 – events are celebrated
B92 – having fun is key
B93 – being pushed hard set me up for success here
… we celebrate events and have fun
… socialising helps to welcome people
B94 – parent involvement is cultural
B95 – parent involvement is good
B96 – parents welcome new parents
B97 – personal invites from the teacher and kids make a difference
B98 – more parental invitations have increased their involvement
B99 – student ownership of learning is more exciting
… it is good that parents get involved here
… personally inviting parent increases their involvement
B100 – students investigating things is more exciting
B101 – teachers have become facilitators
B102 – this is a smallish school
B103 – electives are well received
B104 – this school has a nice feel
B105 – kids and teachers work together
B106 – we have lots of hands on learning
B107 – we have a nice, welcoming environment
… student learning is hands on
… teachers facilitate learning with students
… this small school feels nice and welcoming

Staff Member 2 – Values coding from Field Notes and Researcher Reflections:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
Va – strong student focus	*Aa – cared for*	*Ba – tidy and attractive grounds display care and are welcoming*
Vb – physical appearance of the school	*Ab – welcomed*	*Bb – children are fortunate to have several play spaces*
Vc – physical play spaces	*Ac – privileged*	*Bc – the Principal values the school*
Vd – principal leadership	*Ad – valued*	*Bd – staff recognise good Principal leadership*
Ve- leadership changes		*Be – leadership change has been significant*

***Written paragraph – short summary** (this incorporates summary VAB phrases from transcripts, field notes and reflections):*

SM2 values the aesthetics of this school; it is cared for and accessible for student play. There is a country, community feel acknowledged; while this provides a sense of connection and togetherness in this school community, it is complemented by very welcoming and helpful people. Students have choice and ownership of their classroom and play options during breaks, which includes nature play. Leadership are supportive of staff and respectful of their needs and challenges. SM2 feels a connection to the staff team, welcomed and cared for. Staff are collegial, friendly and enjoy socialising. The front office staff set a positive tone, Library staff are supportive of students, and leadership grow staff morale. Christianity is significant; the cross and altar are in the worship space, which is where community comes together. Students are involved in worship, and parents are invited to help out with reading and other activities.

Key focus *(documented immediately following the interview)*: <mark>WELCOMING – PLAY SPACES - COMMUNITY</mark>

TRANSCRIPTS:

SM2 main key theme: *<mark>TOGETHERNESS</mark>*

VAB key themes: <mark>TOGETHERNESS</mark> - <mark>WELCOMED</mark> – <mark>INVOLVE COMMUNITY</mark>

SM2 – Values key theme:
<mark>TOGETHERNESS</mark>

… first impressions	… inviting staff	… play options for students
… being part of a team	… the welcoming front office staff	… connection
… the programs and play for children	… friendly and helpful people	… Christianity
… togetherness	… students involved in the garden program	… student choice and involvement
… worship time	… supportive Librarian	… country surrounds
… the country, community feel	… an accessible Library	… staff morale and socialising
… well kept grounds	… natural environment for play	… leadership support
… country feel	… social connection for people	… supported staff
… togetherness of staff	… worship time	… parental support and involvement
	… student ownership of class space	… students learn by investigation
	… students choose displays	… working with others

SM2 - Atts key theme:
<mark>WELCOMED</mark>

… connected	… comfortable	… encouraged	… cared for
… impressed	… assisted	… involved	… respected
	… welcomed	… passionate	… welcomed
	… supported	… thoughtful	

SM2 – Beliefs key theme: <mark>INVOLVE COMMUNITY</mark>

… student play options are many
… front office staff make a good first impression
… team and community are key
… outdoor play is scenic
… there is a nice feel here
… the grounds are cared for
… staff collegiality is valued
… staff are inviting and connected
… front office staff advocate for our school
… the front office staff are key
… learning and healthy living are promoted through the kitchen garden program
… reading skills are necessary
… the Library is accessible
… the Librarian supports students
… nature play allows kids to be creative
… the worship area brings community together
… we worship God and have live music
… students are given Bibles for school

… the altar has a cross
… students make the classroom their own
… students choose lunchtime activities
… the cross is significant and has meaning
… we learn about Christianity here
… there is a community feel here
… we are caring, welcoming and connected
… the well-being person provides needed student support
… the country feel is welcoming
… communication and leadership grow staff morale
… staff have a say in school operations
… student involvement in worship increases engagement
… we celebrate events and have fun
… socialising helps to welcome people
… it is good that parents get involved here
… personally inviting parent increases their involvement
… student learning is hands on
… teachers facilitate learning with students
… this small school feels nice and welcoming

Highlighted phrases:

… and instantly I felt at home.
… (our W&P area) … brings community together…
… the front office people … have a vital role to play in community.
… connection's a good word … connected to each other, connected to God, to staff and students;
… getting your kids involved is good;
… But it was welcoming, and had that country feel that I instantly felt at home with.
… leadership knowing their roles, involving us in decisions
… (about parents:) you get a couple doing it then the rest do and make it welcoming for them to come in the first place.
… kids and teachers working together…

STAFF MEMBER 2

VALUES:	ATTITUDES:	BELIEFS:
… first impressions	… connected	… student play options are many
… being part of a team	… impressed	… front office staff make a good first impression
… the programs and play for children	… comfortable	… team and community are key
… togetherness	… assisted	… outdoor play is scenic
… worship time	… welcomed	… there is a nice feel here
… the country, community feel	… supported	… the grounds are cared for
… well kept grounds	… encouraged	… staff collegiality is valued
… country feel	… involved	… staff are inviting and connected
… togetherness of staff	… passionate	… front office staff advocate for our school
… inviting staff	… thoughtful	… the front office staff are key
… the welcoming front office staff	… cared for	… learning and healthy living are promoted through the kitchen garden program
… friendly and helpful people	… respected	… reading skills are necessary
… students involved in the garden program	… welcomed	… the Library is accessible
… supportive Librarian		… the Librarian supports students
… an accessible Library		… nature play allows kids to be creative
… natural environment for play		… the worship area brings community together
… social connection for people		… we worship God and have live music
… worship time		… students are given Bibles for school
… student ownership of class space		… the altar has a cross
… students choose displays		… students make the classroom their own
… play options for students		… students choose lunchtime activities
… connection		… the cross is significant and has meaning
… Christianity		… we learn about Christianity here
… student choice and involvement		… there is a community feel here
… country surrounds		… we are caring, welcoming and connected
… staff morale and socialising		… the well-being person provides needed student support
… leadership support		… the country feel is welcoming
… supported staff		… communication and leadership grow staff morale
… parental support and involvement		… staff have a say in school operations
… students learn by investigation		… student involvement in worship increases engagement
… working with others		… we celebrate events and have fun
		… socialising helps to welcome people
		… it is good that parents get involved here
		… personally inviting parent increases their involvement
		… student learning is hands on
		… teachers facilitate learning with students
		… this small school feels nice and welcoming

Staff Member 2 – Values coding from Researcher's Field Notes and Interview Reflections:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
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Written paragraph – short summary
(this incorporates summary VAB phrases from transcripts, field notes and reflections):

SM2 values the aesthetics of this school; it is cared for and accessible for student play. There is a country, community feel acknowledged; while this provides a sense of connection and togetherness in this school community, it is complemented by very welcoming and helpful people. Students have choice and ownership of their classroom and play options during breaks, which includes nature play. Leadership are supportive of staff and respectful of their needs and challenges. SM2 feels a connection to the staff team, welcomed and cared for. Staff are collegial, friendly and enjoy socialising. The front office staff set a positive tone, Library staff are supportive of students, and leadership grow staff morale. Christianity is significant; the cross and altar are in the worship space, which is where community comes together. Students are involved in worship, and parents are invited to help out with reading and other activities.

Written paragraph - SM2's elaborated summary

SM2 likes the community, country feel of this school. Physically the environment is looked after and aesthetically appealing. The people that one connects with are friendly, helpful and very welcoming. There is a togetherness that exists as part of this community, where people have opportunity to connect with others. SM2 has experienced positive and important first impressions with this school, identifying the front office staff as having been key people in welcoming and helping people.

The classroom and staff room are two of the main places in the school that SM2 talked about. The classroom is a place for students to choose displays, layout and have ownership. In a similar way, staff have opportunity to be heard and shape some elements of this school – such as the reading program and school mission and vision. The principal and leadership provide support to staff, especially during busy and stressful times, which lifts staff morale. The staff room is the home base where staff connect and grow as team; it is also a place where staff socialise and have fun.

The worship space is an area for community to gather for social events and worship times. Christianity underpins much of what happens in this school. Students learn about God and some of the symbols and artefacts in the worship area, experience worship times, and can get involved in the worship experiences. When this happens, student engagement increases.

SM2 talked about the students in this school and appreciates the opportunities they have to shape their learning, to choose which play spaces they use during breaks, and also develop their creativity in the nature play area. The kitchen garden program allows students to learn about healthy living and eating and also share these ideas at home. Parents are also now quite involved in this school, as a result of being personally invited to assist via their child/ren or class teacher.

This school is seen to be small; it has a nice, welcoming, country feel that is important to SM2.

Written paragraph - Staff perspective:

There is so much I like about this school! Physically it looks so nice and has a lovely natural environment surrounding it, which tells me that it is cared for. It has a country feel – which makes me feel peaceful and at home. But it is the people who are most important. They are just so welcoming and helpful. When I started here a few years ago, I really noticed this and appreciated the help of the front office people in particular. More recently I've appreciated the help of the Library and well-being staff too.

As a staff, we are a team that gels as a community. We support each other, get to know each other and care for each other – teachers and all the extra staff too. I find our staff meeting times really inviting. We worked on our mission and vision statement, and I value the opportunity we have had as staff to be heard by the principal and leadership in this school. They get us involved, listen to us and make changes to improve things – like the reading program and inviting parents to help out more. Leadership look after us when we are stressed; they give us time to get our work done, but also let us have fun and socialise; this really lifts staff morale.

I think the students are fortunate to be here. They have lots of play spaces to choose from during recess and lunch, and I've been impressed with their creative play that uses rocks, branches and sticks in the nature play area. There are also lunchtime activities that the students can opt to do in the worship area. And then there's our Library that has now been moved to a place that is more accessible. Our worship area is a space that brings people together for worship but also for school events. It's a place where we connect – connect to God, connect to students, parents and staff. I think it is great that the students can get involved in worship too.

Written paragraph - Researcher Interpretation:

For SM2, the appearance of the school grounds determines the level of care for the school. In a similar way, the welcoming nature of people implies there is a deep love and care held for the school and its community. Inviting parents to help out is a way to open doors and connect people more deeply to this community. SM2 holds a strong appreciation for togetherness, for connecting with and between groups of people in this school community. Involving students in learning and classroom related matters and inviting parents to help out is being open, inclusive and provides a sense of ownership or belonging to this school. SM2 has experienced this inclusive, welcoming community with leadership and amongst the staff team, and seeks opportunities to include student and parent groups where possible. SM2 appreciates the student play spaces and choices provided; the students are very fortunate to have places to be creative and free to play.

Appendix L Parent 4 summary document

Parent 4 – Values coding from Interview Transcript
VALUES: This parent values ….

Cross and plaque:
V2 – the cross
V3 – faith-based schooling
V4 – school and family connection
V4a – Christ as the centre
V5 – authentic Christian school
V6 – openness to teachings of Christianity
V7 – classroom devotion area
V8 – regular morning devotion
V9 – Christ in the centre of our relationship
V10 – reading books included a Bible story
… Christianity being central
… Christian teachings, devotions and artefacts

Worship area:
V11 – regular, weekly worship
V12 – service to community
V13 – school encourages 'looking outside yourself'
V14 – school encourages compassion
V15 – weekly school worship
V16 – worship regularly
V17 – various events happen here
V18 – attending worship
V19 – faith elements evident
V20 – banners and key sayings
V21 – cross signifies faith
V22 – visual banners and displays for church celebrations
… worship occurs weekly
… this School supports community service
… symbolic artefacts and practices

Indigenous mural:
V23 – Indigenous art connects to original people
V24 – children embrace original people of this area
V25 – the need to amend history and damage to Indigenous people
V26 – the aboriginal people
V27 – aboriginal cultural elements within school culture
… connections to Indigenous people

Nature play:
V28 – the signpost showing other countries
V29 – curriculum program
V30 – international outlook
V31 – investigative outdoor play
… inclusion of international perspectives

Mother's Day bag:
V1 – Mother's Day bags
V32 – Mother's Day bag
V33 – loving and caring-natured approach
V33a – children's emotions are supported
V34 – emotional times are OK
V35 – owning and expressing feelings

General:
V39 – being present in the school on my days off
V40 – united values passed on from the Principal to the kids and then the parents
V41 – the feel of what's important to people
… what is important is shared and felt
-----------------*break in transcript flow* -----------------
V42 – governance of School by Lutheran church
V43 – Principal interview and selection process
V44 – Principal represents the heart of the mission
V45 – supporting, educating and growing healthy children
V46 – teacher values and passion match those of Principal and Lutheran church
V47 – school values match parent values
V48 – school values
V49 – like people and values
… the Principal represents the heart of the Lutheran church
… core values are endorsed by people connected in and with this School
-----------------*break in transcript flow* -----------------
V50 – personal contact of a smaller school
V51 – time for play for the children
V52 – children's school-readiness
V53 – everyone knowing everyone
V54 – being a part of the School
V55 – knowing what is going on
V56 – knowing the culture
V57 – knowing the community exists because of our children
V58 – health and well-being of children
V59 – children feeling happy and healthy
V60 – environment is safe and supportive
… knowing the happenings and culture here
… the children are healthy and supported
-----------------*break in transcript flow* -----------------
V61 – the attitude of this community
V62 – meeting people within the School
V63 – getting to know people via work, church, shopping.
… connecting with people associated with this School

V36 – school and family values are similar
V37 – children having freedom to express feelings
V38 – supportive and encouraging teachers
… Mother's Day bags
… feelings and emotions are accepted
… the care and support

ATTITUDES: This parent thinks or feels ….

Cross and plaque: A2 – conscious of symbolism and meaning A3 – authenticity in Christ alongside everything A4 – loves devotion being regular A5 – connected with God *… connected through symbols and practices*	A28 – understanding of challenges A29 – thankful for accommodating teachers *… emotionally attached to Mother's Day bags* *… thankful that feelings and emotions are accepted*
Worship area: A6 – serving is valuable A7 – appreciates the children exploring faith values A8 – thankful worship is dominant A9 – appreciates seeing what the kids do A10 – enjoys seeing kids involved in worship A11 – inspired by displays A12 – loves the wise sayings A13 – love the cross made by the kids A14 – loves kids' interpretations in displays A15 – appreciates the representations of compassion *… appreciative of kids being involved* *… loves the visuals and meanings*	**General:** A30 – enjoys helping out in School A31 – appreciates the feel and united values A32 – appreciates the common values A33 – aware of complementary school-home values A34 – encouraged by the culture of this community A35 – home and school environments are in tune A36 – School doesn't dictate home values/culture *… appreciative that the home and school values match* -----------------break in transcript flow ----------------- A37 – struggled with school change and differences A38 – struggles with structured class A39 – panicky for my child A40 – disappointed with structures evident in Foundation A41 – appreciates personal touch *… concerned about structures in child's year level*
Indigenous mural: A16 – accepting of Indigenous people A17 – surprised at lack of understanding of annihilation of aboriginals A18 – sad about aboriginal history A19 – thankful aboriginal people don't retaliate A20 – appreciates the recognition of aboriginal culture in this school *… thankful Indigenous people are acknowledged*	-----------------break in transcript flow ----------------- A42 – inactively connected to P & F A43 – enjoys being involved A44 – likes accompanying children to/from school A45 – appreciates this School A46 – not concerned with academics A47 – casual about education *… comfortable with this School*
Nature play: A21 – connected to both countries A22 – appreciative of outdoors A22a – appreciative of investigative learning *… appreciative of broader learning*	-----------------break in transcript flow ----------------- A48 – relaxed about chatting with people at School A49 – appreciates friendships through children A50 – enjoys community connections and associations *… appreciative of School friendships and connections*
Mother's Day bag: A1 – sentimental A22a – loved by children A23 – emotional about Mother's Day bags A24 – cared for by the environment A25 – thankful children can be emotional A26 – free to express feelings A27 – accepting that is it normal to express feelings	

BELIEFS: This parent accepts or knows ….

Cross and plaque:
B2 – the Spirit is significant in our family
B3 – our kids experience this Spirit at school
B4 – the cross symbolises Christ at the School's centre
B5 – the teachings of Jesus are central here
B6 – the cross marks classroom devotion areas
B7 – Christ underpinned our relationship
B8 – God is part of our family
… the cross signifies Christ as present and central
… the Spirit is present at School and in our family

Worship area:
B9 – worship is weekly
B10 – service is strong
B11 – children were deprived a little
B12 – worship is weekly
B13 – assemblies celebrate academic achievement
B14 – celebrations happen here
B15 – worship area is a place of celebration
B16 – altar and bible are central
B17 – banners come down for an event
B18 – butterfly display was beautiful
B19 – Lutheran churches held service here
B20 – cross is beautiful
B21 – Lutheran churches have combined
B22 – churches are utilising display spaces
… the worship area is a place of celebration
… displays and artefacts are prominent here

Indigenous mural:
B23 – my children are dual nationality
B24 – aboriginals treated poorly in colonial times
B25 – history and damage is unresolved
B26 – aboriginal people are a beautiful race
B27 – oppressed people trigger wars
B28 – aboriginals can rightly backlash against whites
… damages is unresolved with aboriginal people
… oppressed people retaliate

Nature play:
B29 – my own children are split between 2 countries
B30 – my own kids need contact with other countries
B31 – the world is bigger than this School
B32 – my own family is outdoorsy
… my children need contact beyond this School and country

Mother's Day bag:
B33 – Mother's Day bags express my children's love

B34 – children are naturally loving and caring
B35 – children's expressions are accepted
B36 – different colours represent different emotions
B37 – no feelings are bad
B38 – feelings are normal and natural
B39 – feelings are expressed at many levels and ways
B40 – a personality clash creates a challenge
B41 – the Mother's Day bags connect to personal emotions
… emotional expressions and feelings are natural and accepted
… the Mother's Day bags represent love and care from my children

General:
B42 – comings or goings are based near the youngest's class
B43 – important stuff comes from leadership
B44 – the Principal represents Lutheran church values and heart
B45 – teachers' values and hearts match the Principal
B46 – parents sense and feel common values to their own
B47 – some parents think God is part of education here
B48 – parents have educational choice
B49 – non-faith parents appreciate and want these values for their children
B50 – the culture grows as like-valued people join in the community
B51 – home and school experiences influence children's characters
… leadership's heart and values permeate through this School
… parents select schools for education and its values
… children are shaped by experiences at home and school
------------------break in transcript flow ------------------
B52 – Reception level overseas is different to here
B53 – children have more time home if they are not ready for school
B54 – child was ready for structured Foundation class
B55 – children are bright and intelligent
B56 – children are academically fine
B57 – academic achievement is relative to well-being and school environment
… there are schooling differences between countries
… my children are balanced in academics and health
------------------break in transcript flow ------------------

B58 – this School is a mini-community B59 – most staff are known to me B60 – the parents I know are friends of my children B61 – parents who know each other chat more B62 – Foundation children need to be collected	B63 – a small, close community know each other B64 – work, church and shops are places to get to know parents *… people get to know each other in this School community*

Key focus *(documented immediately following the interview)*: CHRISTIAN VALUES
TRANSCRIPTS: P4 main key theme: *CHRISTIAN VALUES*
VAB key themes: CHRISTIANITY – APPRECIATION – REPRESENTATION

P4 – Values key theme: CHRISTIANITY
… Christianity being central
… Christian teachings, devotions and artefacts
… worship occurs weekly
… this School supports community service
… symbolic artefacts and practices
… connections to Indigenous people
… inclusion of international perspectives
… Mother's Day bags
… feelings and emotions are accepted
… the care and support
… what is important is shared and felt
… the Principal represents the heart of the Lutheran church
… core values are endorsed by people connected in and with this School
… knowing the happenings and culture here
… the children are healthy and supported
… connecting with people associated with this School
P4 – Attitudes key theme: APPRECIATION
… connected through symbols and practices
… appreciative of kids being involved
… loves the visuals and meanings
… thankful Indigenous people are acknowledged
… appreciative of broader learning
… emotionally attached to Mother's Day bags
… thankful that feelings and emotions are accepted
… appreciative that the home and school values match
… concerned about structures in child's year level
… comfortable with this School
… appreciative of School friendships and connections
P4 – Beliefs key theme: REPRESENTATION
… the cross signifies Christ as present and central
… the Spirit is present at School and in our family
… the worship area is a place of celebration
… displays and artefacts are prominent here
… damages is unresolved with aboriginal people
… oppressed people retaliate
… emotional expressions and feelings are natural and accepted
… the Mother's Day bags represent love and care from my children
… my children need contact beyond this School and country
… leadership's heart and values permeate through this School
… parents select schools for education and its values
… children are shaped by experiences at home and school
… there are schooling differences between countries
… my children are balanced in academics and health
… people get to know each other in this School community

Parent 4 – Values coding from Researcher Field Notes and Interview Reflections:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
Va – Christ as the centre	Aa – intrigues with this research	Ba – Christ is at the centre
Vb – School values	Ab – reflective and measured with words	Bb – Quantitative research dominates
Vc – choosing accurate words	Ac – thoughtful and reflective	Bc – Christian rituals and practices are important.
Vd -Christian routines and rituals		

Written paragraph - summary (this incorporates summary codes from transcripts, field notes and reflections):

P4 shared that the values dominant in this School and the Christian influence are significant. Christianity is central and evident through symbolic artefacts, rituals and practices like devotion and worship. The Lutheran church heart and values are demonstrated through the principal and leadership; they permeate through the staff and children to people connected with this School. This parent senses a Christian presence at this School and at home. P4 appreciates that broader Indigenous and international perspectives are an important part of learning; it is acknowledged that unresolved hurt exists with the aboriginal people.

This parent is thankful for the love, care and support within this School, and the complementary home and school values that are evident in this School community. These values and experiences shape children, with some sense of balance being evident in the children academically and with their health. P4 acknowledges the need for emotions and feelings to be shared and is thankful they are accepted at this School. There is also an openness by people associated with this School to get to know others and connect with each other.

Written paragraph - P4's Story: *Following the interview with this parent, I documented that the values and Christian heart were central in this School for this parent.*

P4 lived and worked overseas for 10 years before returning to his/her home country. During the time overseas, P4 married a Christian person from that country and had children. As Christians, P4 shares 'God is part of our family as well'. As parents they are actively nurturing Christian relationships and values at home by regularly reading Bible stories and praying with the children before bedtime.

The family moved to Australia in recent years, meaning this family is now split between two countries. The school their children attended overseas was smaller and more intimate; everyone in the school and community was known to each other. This School in Australia is larger and it is Lutheran. It was important for the parents that their children attend a Christian school that was

actively faith-based to complement the home and family value system; this was important for their children and has been their experience: 'it gives you a sense of united …. values …. of what's important to people'. It is important to remember that this parent selected the photos of the cross and plaque and then the worship space as their most special photographs of this School. As well, P4 recognises that symbols, rituals and practices are meaningful and important, and highlights these numerous times throughout the interview.

This school provides an educational program with an international focus, which is highly valued by P4. It is important that their children learn to look beyond self and recognise the importance of serving other people, whilst considering other countries and cultures. While there are some educational differences to the overseas school which have caused some anxiety for P4, things have been fine.

Recently there have been some difficult times for the family; as a family they have had to learn to share feelings and emotions rather than hide them. P4 appreciates that these responses have also been encouraged at the school. The children are happy and healthy in this School and system. With the move to a larger school and community, the parents have had to make a concerted effort to intentionally connect with families and people in this School community. To do this, P4 has volunteered at this School on non-working days, and intentionally walked the children onto/from the School grounds in mornings and afternoons to chat with parents on the School grounds and admits 'we're involved even more than when we were in (country)'. As a result, they now feel accepted and part of this community.

These are the summary VAB phrases [VALUES, ATTITUDES and BELIEFS] from the INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT. It shows how key ideas/concepts were identified for the summary.

Summary VALUES phrases:
… *Christianity being central*
… *Christian teachings, devotions and artefacts*
… *worship occurs weekly*
… *this School supports community service*
… *symbolic artefacts and practices*
… *connections to Indigenous people*
… *inclusion of international perspectives*
… *Mother's Day bags*
… *feelings and emotions are accepted*
… *the care and support*
… *what is important is shared and felt*
… *the Principal represents the heart of the Lutheran church*
… *core values are endorsed by people connected in and with this School*
… *knowing the happenings and culture here*
… *the children are healthy and supported*
… *connecting with people associated with this School*
… *connected through symbols and practices*

Summary VALUES phrases:

… *appreciative of kids being involved*

… *loves the visuals and meanings*

… *thankful Indigenous people are acknowledged*

… *appreciative of broader learning*

… *emotionally attached to Mother's Day bags*

… *thankful that feelings and emotions are accepted*

… *appreciative that the home and school values match*

… *concerned about structures in child's year level*

… *comfortable with this School*

… *appreciative of School friendships and connections*

Summary BELIEFS phrases:

… *the cross signifies Christ as present and central*

… *the Spirit is present at School and in our family*

… *the worship area is a place of celebration*

… *displays and artefacts are prominent here*

… *damages are unresolved with aboriginal people*

… *oppressed people retaliate*

… *emotional expressions and feelings are natural and accepted*

… *the Mother's Day bags represent love and care from my children*

… *my children need contact beyond this School and country*

… *leadership's heart and values permeate through this School*

… *parents select schools for education and its values*

… *children are shaped by experiences at home and school*

… *there are schooling differences between countries*

… *my children are balanced in academics and health*

… *people get to know each other in this School community*

Parent 4 – Values coding from Researcher Field Notes and Interview Reflections:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
Va – Christ as the centre	Aa – intrigued with this research	Ba – Christ is at the centre
Vb – School values	Ab – reflective and measured with words	Bb – Quantitative research dominates
Vc – choosing accurate words	Ac – thoughtful and reflective	Bc – Christian rituals and practices are important.
Vd -Christian routines and rituals		

Written paragraph - summary (this incorporates summary VAB phrases from transcripts, field notes and reflections):

P4 shared that the values dominant in this School and the Christian influence are significant. Christianity is central and evident through symbolic artefacts, rituals and practices like devotion and worship. The Lutheran church heart and values are demonstrated through the Principal and leadership; they permeate through the staff and children to people connected with this School. This parent senses a Christian presence at this School and at home.

P4 appreciates that broader Indigenous and international perspectives are an important part of learning; it is acknowledged that unresolved hurt exists with the aboriginal people.

This parent is thankful for the love, care and support within this School, and the complementary home and school values that are evident in this School community. These values and experiences shape children, with some sense of balance being evident in the children academically and with their health. P4 acknowledges the need for emotions and feelings to be shared and is thankful they are accepted at this School. There is also an openness by people associated with this School to get to know others and connect with each other.

Appendix M Researcher reflective journal key themes

RESEARCHER REFLECTIVE JOURNAL:

VAB key themes:

CARING COMMUNITY – WELCOMING AND ACCEPTED – PEOPLE AS COMMUNITY

Values key themes: CARING COMMUNITY

… music	… community	… acceptance
… W&P rituals and practices	… welcome conversation	… conversations
… Christian practices	… W&P and staff devotion	… presence
… community connections	… the Friday routine	… people in this community
… care	… acceptance and presence	… care and community
… rituals	… openness of children	… staff and student interactions
… connectedness	… learning activities	
… conversation	… care	

Attitudes key themes: WELCOMING and ACCEPTED

… warmth	… affirmed	… positive	… keen
… welcoming	… welcomed	… accepted	… affirmed
… curious	… interested	… accepted	… inclusive
… relaxed	… welcomed	… joyous	
… busy	… impressed	… busy-ness	
… interested			

Beliefs key themes: PEOPLE AS COMMUNITY

… volunteers are active	… praying relaxes staff
… Lutheran tradition and heritage is influential	… children utilise activity choices
… my research is of interest	… education is inclusive
… people are giving	… people are happy here
… people want to be here	… staff and students have a hub/heart
… this is community	… front office staff are key people
… Lutheran tradition and heritage shape Lutheran communities	… this community works
… W&P involves people	… events are ritualistic
… there are different activities each day	… care is valued
… conversation is valued	… community is connecting
… children have choices with play	

Researcher reflective journal written paragraph – summary:

As researcher, this school was valued as a caring community; through conversations and greetings, people were welcomed and accepted. Christian rituals and practices were important for this community.

This school felt welcoming and a positive place to be. While people were busy, they were interested in this research and very accepting of my presence.

My experiences during school visits affirmed that this school saw itself as a group of people who are community. There are influential Lutheran traditions practiced at this school that are ritualistic, and involve people who are happy and choose to be present.

Appendix N Documents and artefacts key themes

VAB key themes: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS – WELCOMING AND CARING – CONNECTED

Values key theme: COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

… student data	… school daily logistics	… serving others
… school identity 2	… communication	… happy, groups of children
… communication 5	… central cross 4	… learning together by investigating
… presentation	… identity	… our history
… activities and programs 11	… imagery	… our natural environment
… welcoming gatherings 14	… Indigenous connections	… news and events
… communication	… garden boxes 9	… accessibility and learning environment
… learning pathways 7	… growing plants	… partnerships and connections
… activities and events	… open spaces	… valuing each child
… opportunities for parents and families	… trees and nature	… sharing student and staff learning
… Lutheran 3 history 2	… shelter	… student success and engagement
… connections with Christ	… variety	… community connections
… fun events and activities	… symbols	… opportunities for camps and programs
… community connections	… nature area	… quality Lutheran education
… celebrations	… respect for Indigenous	… values and history
… Lutheran education	… memorials	… acceptance
… learning	… outward focus	… outings
… pre and post school connections	… community	… connecting community
… children mixing together	… spaces	… learning
… our community	… sharing information	

Attitudes key theme: WELCOMING AND CARING

… organised 2	… proud 3	… intrigued	… caring	… committed
… welcoming 3	… coordinated	… encouraged	… relational	… happy
… supported 5	… busy 2	… proud	… active	… welcoming
… clear 3	… caring	… relaxed	… positive 2	… proud
… being accommodating	… energetic 4	… inspired	… open	… successful
… contented 2 and caring	… community minded	… appreciative	… informed	… busy

Beliefs key theme: CONNECTED.

… we are local, global, connected 12	… the library is a viewing area
… we are a Lutheran school 8	… meeting and sitting areas are provided
… we provide a variety of opportunities 5	… we are connected to Lutheran history
… this community engages, cares 5 and connects	… children enjoy learning here
… the uniform identifies students	… learning opportunities are broad
… choices and opportunities exist	… we connect with God and each other
… children enjoy activities 2	… we serve and celebrate as community
… students are successful 2	… all are catered for here
… learning is showcased 5	… we value our volunteers
… celebrations are enjoyed 6	… our school is Christian and a good choice
… we provide Christian education	… we provide quality Christian education
… symbols and images portray messages 6	… volunteers and help are appreciated
… we are connected and community focused	… learning is holistic and relevant
… children are happy here 7	… our children are positive, local and global citizens
… communication is important	… each child has opportunities to serve and be successful
… the cross has meaning	… our school is unique
… this is a Lutheran church school	…we value our community and its programs
… this land has historical and cultural 3 significance 2	… students learn and explore outside
… play areas are shady and grassy 2	… we are a community
… symbols and artefacts have meaning	… we are a school of the Lutheran church
… memorials and names of people are significant	

Documents and Artefacts: Written paragraph – summary

From the documents and artefacts accessed, this is a connected school offering a Christian education. It has historical connections to the Lutheran church; its identity is important as is the history and significance in the symbols and memorials around the school.

This school highly values community connections and opportunities to bring people together. It does this through various events, activities and programs communicated to the community. This school feels caring, welcoming, positive and inspiring. It is a place that sees itself as busy yet organised, and accommodating of other's needs. It is a relaxed place that is proud of its successes.

Children enjoy learning through programs and activities which are inside, as well as outside in the natural environment where there are trees, plants and grassed areas. Students have various opportunities to serve, be successful and celebrate, and can be seen happily engaged in learning.

Appendix O Table summary of findings

These are the findings from the photos, VAB (Values, Attitude, Beliefs) key themes and written paragraphs themes. The themes are coloured for achievement, advocacy, agency, belonging, Christianity and community, which are the six main themes for this research. They are referred to in Chapters Five and Six.

| Data group	Findings from the photos and their stories			Findings from the Values, Attitudes, Beliefs (VAB) key themes						Findings from the Written Paragraphs
Students	Agency Agency Agency Agency Agency Agency	Achievement Achievement Achievement Achievement Freedom to be Freedom to be Freedom to be Freedom to be	Protection Investment Memories	Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment Enjoyment	Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play Freedom in play	Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation Representation Representation Representation Learning Learning Learning	Learning Learning Learning Learning Success Success Success Success Success Success Success Success Success	Support Support Support Support Support Support Support Safety Safety Safety Safety	People People People People People Belonging Belonging Belonging Together Together Together	Belonging Opportunities Freedom Achievement Christian beliefs
Staff	Connected community Connected community Community Tradition Heritage	Investment Agency Skills		Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected	Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected Connected Belonging Belonging Belonging	Belonging Belonging Belonging Belonging Valued Valued Valued Valued	Traditions Traditions Traditions Traditions Traditions Support Support Progress Progress	Community Community Community Community Community Community Community		Relationships Representation *(practices, artefacts, places, people)* Lutheran beliefs *(relational nature, actions)*

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Data group	Findings from the photos and their stories	Findings from the Values, Attitudes, Beliefs (VAB) key themes	Findings from the Written Paragraphs
Principal	No photos taken	Relationships Relationships Relationships Relationships / People People People	Relationships Relational nature Belief (in staff, parents, *God*, school) New and old
Parents	Community Community / Connections Belonging Belonging / Investment Investment / Success Achievement Skills / Christianity Traditions Memories	Christianity Christianity Christianity Christianity Christianity Christianity Christianity / Community Community Community Community Community Community / Connected Connected Feel Feel Feel / Care Care Care Care Care Care / Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation Appreciation	Christian influence Connected people Advocacy
Researcher Reflective Journal	Not applicable	Community Community Community / Belonging Belonging	Belonging Christianity Community
Documents And Artefacts	Not applicable	Connected Connected	Connected Christian Community

Appendix P Visuals of written text

Student visual developed from key themes and summary written paragraphs.
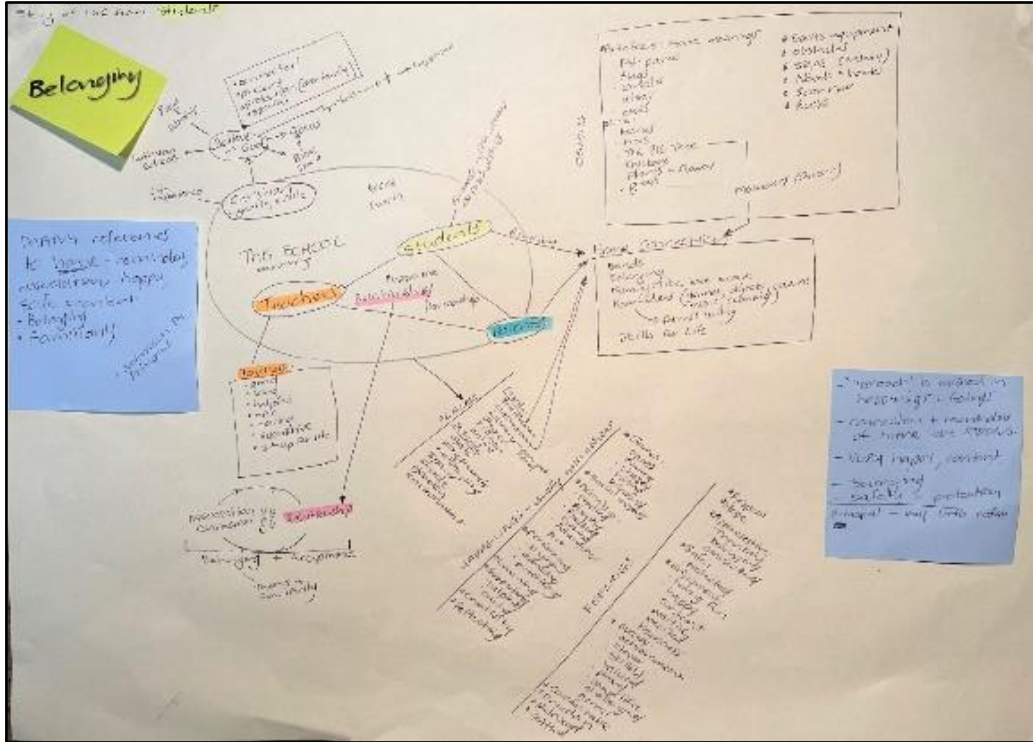
Staff visual developed from key themes and summary written paragraphs.
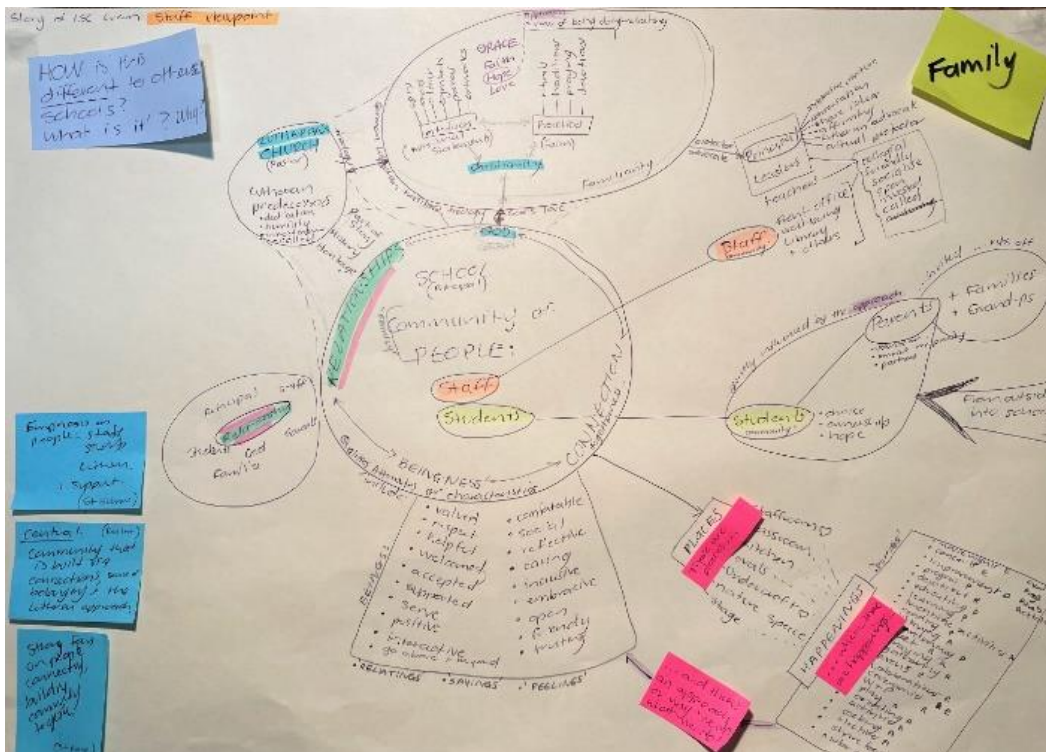
Appendix Q Student 2 transcript

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Appendix R Staff member 2 transcript

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Appendix S Parent 4 transcript

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Appendix T School vision and core propositions (Artefact 2)

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Appendix U The main and minor practices from all data groups

Achievement	Advocacy	Agency	Belonging	Christianity	Community

Learning
• Life skills
• Progress
• Skills
 	
Success
• Competition
• Creativity
• Performing
	Appreciation
	• Grateful
	• Respect
	
	Belief in people
	• Love
	• Faith
	• Grace
	• Hope
	
	Investment
	• Calling
	• Vocation
	
	Protection
	• Care
	• Nurture
	
	Service
	• Give back
	• Do unto others
	• Unconditional
		Freedom/choice
		• Play breaks
		• To be
		
		Opportunities
		• Indoor
		• Outdoor
		  – Nature
		  – Being
		
		Play
		• Games
		• Activities
			Beingness
			• Comfortable
			  – Secure
			  – Safe
			• Relaxed
			• Solitude
			  – Escape
			  … Novels, Tree
			Connected
			• Welcoming
			• Inclusive
			• Respectful
			• Trusted
			
			Nurtured
			• Family-like
			• At home
			• Enjoyment
			• Love
				Approach
				• Relational nature
				  – Grace
				  – Hope
				  – Care
				  – Supported
				• Culture
				Beliefs
				• God
				• Jesus
				• Lutheran
				Lutheranism
				• Rituals
				• Events
				• Activities
				  – Repeating
				  – Familiarity
				• Celebrations
				• Service
				Representation
				• Artefacts
				• Signs
				• Symbols
				Traditions
				• History
				• Stories
				• Enduringness
				• Memories
					Homely
					
					Relationships
					• Together
					• People

Appendix V Parent 4 coding

These are the summary VAB phrases **[VALUES, ATTITUDES** and **BELIEFS]** from the INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT. It shows how key ideas/concepts were identified for the summary.

… Christianity being central
… Christian teachings, devotions and artefacts
… worship occurs weekly
… this School supports community service
… symbolic artefacts and practices
… connections to indigenous people
… inclusion of international perspectives
… Mother's Day bags
… feelings and emotions are accepted
… the care and support
… what is important is shared and felt
… the Principal represents the heart of the Lutheran Church
… core values are endorsed by people connected in and with this School
… knowing the happenings and culture here
… the children are healthy and supported
… connecting with people associated with this School
… connected through symbols and practices

… appreciative of kids being involved
… loves the visuals and meanings
… thankful indigenous people are acknowledged
… appreciative of broader learning
… emotionally attached to Mother's Day bags
… thankful that feelings and emotions are accepted
… appreciative that the home and school values match
… concerned about structures in child's year level
… comfortable with this School
… appreciative of School friendships and connections

… the cross signifies Christ as present and central
… the Spirit is present at School and in our family
… the worship area is a place of celebration
… displays and artefacts are prominent here
… damages are unresolved with aboriginal people
… oppressed people retaliate
… emotional expressions and feelings are natural and accepted
… the Mother's Day bags represent love and care from my children
… my children need contact beyond this School and country
… leadership's heart and values permeate through this School
… parents select schools for education and its values
… children are shaped by experiences at home and school
… there are schooling differences between countries
… my children are balanced in academics and health
… people get to know each other in this School community

FROM THE RESEARCHER'S FIELD NOTES AND INTERVIEW REFLECTIONS:

Coded Values	Coded Attitudes	Coded Beliefs
Va – Christ as the centre	Aa – intrigued with this research	Ba – Christ is at the centre
Vb – School values	Ab – reflective and measured with words	Bb – Quantitative research dominates
Vc – choosing accurate words	Ac – thoughtful and reflective	Bc – Christian rituals and practices are important.
Vd -Christian routines and rituals		

Written paragraph - summary (this incorporates summary VAB phrases from transcripts, field notes and reflections):

P4 shared that the values dominant in this School and the Christian influence are significant. Christianity is central and evident through symbolic artefacts, rituals and practices like devotion and worship. The Lutheran church heart and values are demonstrated through the Principal and leadership; they permeate through the staff and children to people connected with this School. This parent senses a Christian presence at this School and at home.

P4 appreciates that broader indigenous and international perspectives are an important part of learning; it is acknowledged that unresolved hurt exists with the aboriginal people. This parent is thankful for the love, care and support within this School, and the complementary home and school values that are evident in this School community. These values and experiences shape children, with some sense of balance being evident in the children academically and with their health. P4 acknowledges the need for emotions and feelings to be shared and is thankful they are accepted at this School. There is also an openness by people associated with this School to get to know others and connect with each other.

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Appendix W Permission and informed consent forms

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