PARENTS' VOICE: INTERNATIONAL RELOCATEE PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES UTILIZED IN THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN'S EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT

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PARENTS' VOICE: INTERNATIONAL RELOCATEE PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES ON PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT PRACTICES UTILIZED IN THEIR YOUNG CHILDREN'S EARLY LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT (249 pp.)

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The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study is to understand international relocatee parents' perspectives on parental involvement practices utilized to support their young children's early learning and development. To better understand the nuances of the parental involvement practices, I conducted a multi-case study involving thirteen international relocatee parents representing countries such as China, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico and Albania, whose children ages 3 to 5 years old are enrolled in the Early Education Center (EEC), a university laboratory school located on the campus of Midwestern University.

As the data revealed, the parental involvement practices study participants used to support the early learning and development of their young children consisted of several characteristics. First, they required a belief in doing what is best for their child at an early age. Second, they entailed the knowledge parents possessed on the experiences that are developmentally appropriate and helped the child to grow physically, social-emotionally, and cognitively. Lastly, these practices reflected the lived experiences plus cultural and educational background that shaped international parents' vision on the choice of practices they used to promote the holistic development of their children in their host country. Moreover, as parents engaged with their children and their children's schools and communities, their cultural,

educational, and life experiences expanded, creating an additive effect to their existing parental involvement frameworks. The findings of this study add to the debate among schools, communities, and policy makers about what it means to be an involved parent in the U.S. mainstream school system.

Keywords: early childhood education, international relocatee parents, funds of knowledge, parental involvement

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to
my parents, Khudonazar and Tobiston;
my siblings, Yusuf, Ruslan, Atrigul, and Aslibegim;
My former husband Uvaydo and my daughter, Ramila.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A significant body of evidence from the early childhood and brain development fields demonstrates the critical importance of socioemotional and cognitive development of young children (Barnet, 1995; Becker, Klein & Biedinger, 2013; Burger, 2010; Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). It is during the ages of 0 to 8 years when children develop linguistic, cognitive, social, emotional, and regulatory skills, which predict their later functioning in many domains (Barnett, 1995, 2011; Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017; Ramey & Ramey, 2004; Shonkoff & Philips, 2000; Trawick -Smith, 2014; Woolfolk & Perry, 2012).

Other convincing evidence points to the critical role of parents in supporting the holistic development of their children from birth. Inevitably, parents are their children's first and most enduring teachers. Children begin learning at home long before they ever reach the classroom, so parents play a critical role in supporting early childhood education and development of their young children (Crowley & Wheeler, 2014; Grolnock, 2016; Henderson & Berla, 1994; Hindman et al, 2012; Hoover-Dampsey & Sandler 1995, 1997; Yoshikawa et al., 2013).

Research from around the world (Desforges & Aboucaar, 2003; Kavanagh, 2013; Sime & Sheridan, 2014 (UK); Emerson, Fear, Fox & Sanders, 2012; Jennings & Bosch, 2011; (Australia); Brooking & Campbell, 2008 (New Zealand); Borgonovi & Montt, 2012 (14 countries) and the United States (Arnold, Zeljo, Doctoroff & Ortiz, 2008; Barnard, 2004; Castro et al., 2015; Epstein, 1983, 2002; Greene & Long, 2010; Jeynes, 2012; Li, 2012; Nam & Park, 2014; Ye & Jiang, 2014; Wilder, 2014) has found that active parent involvement in the well-being and early education of young children is positively associated with higher academic

attainment, social-emotional functioning, improved behavior, and overall positive outcomes later in life.

Even though parental involvement in the early education and development of a young child is unarguably important, it becomes more significant when families move or relocate for a limited period of time due to study or work, immigrate permanently to a new country, or flee their home due to war, famine, persecution, or natural disaster (Amigo, 2016; Auerbach, 2011; Suarez-Orozco, Abu-Zena, & Marks, 2015; Isik-Ercan, 2018).

The United States of America is one of the top destinations for immigrants i.e. foreign-born nationals and welcomes hundreds of people every day. Foreigners seeking to enter the U.S. must typically obtain a visa, which defines their immigration status. If there is no documentation proving immigration status, the person entered the country illegally or undocumented. Visas or immigration status may be divided into two general categories: immigrant and nonimmigrant. Immigrant visas are issued to aliens seeking permanent residence in the U.S., while nonimmigrant visas authorize a stay for a limited period of time with a specific purpose (Hirschman, 2014).

The general term immigrant includes individuals who voluntarily relocate for long-term resettlement and who are mainly "pulled" toward a new country by social, economic, and political forces (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, p.23). For the purpose of this study, I will use the term "international relocatee" to refer to the population of parents who have relocated to the United States as immigrants, refugees, families awaiting asylum, international students, and visiting scholars (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). I use the term international rather than immigrant because words matter. The recent negative immigration climate in the U.S. including the harsh misleading rhetoric, restrictive immigration policies known as "America First," border

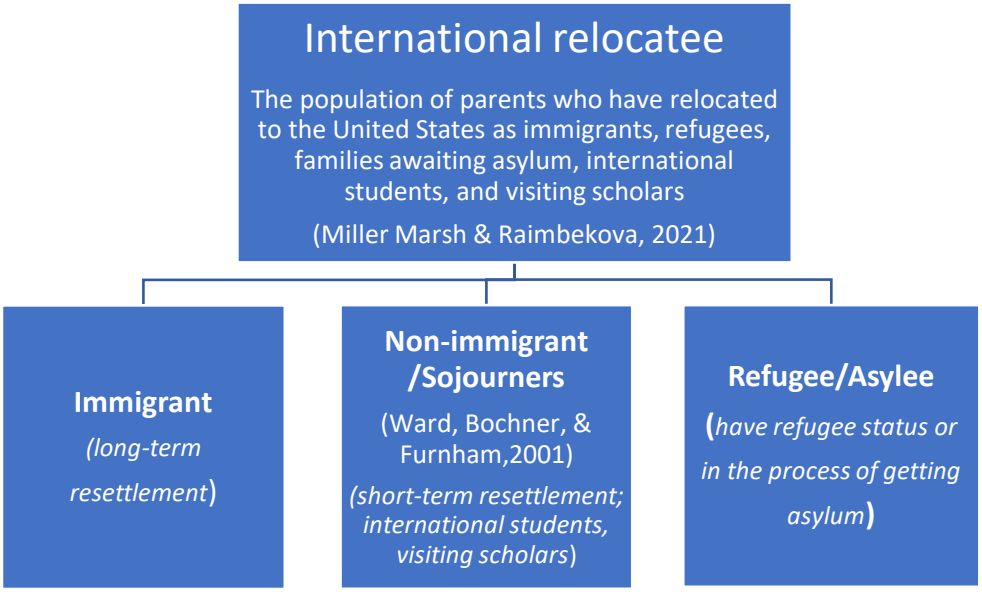
wall construction with Mexico, refugee resettlement cuts, travel bans, family separations, and even restrictions on legal immigration (Amaded, 2019), put in place by the Trump administration is a clear indication that immigrants are not currently welcome to the U.S.

Consequently, this negative attitude towards immigrants and their children has created a hostile climate where immigrants are viewed solely from a deficit perspective and the focus is not on the potential or cultural richness they bring to the country. Thus, I argue that the word immigrant is not being used as its real dictionary definition, "a person who comes to a country to take up permanent residence" (Merriam-Webster online dictionary, n.d.), but is being used as a label that carries negative connotations, such as immigrants are criminals, rapists, or drug dealers, and that undocumented immigrants are an "infestation" to an American society (Diavalo, 2019). Therefore, I will use the umbrella term "international" instead of "immigrant" to refer to the participants of my study, who are foreign-born nationals who came to the U.S. for various reasons and hold various immigration statuses. Both words will be used interchangeably throughout the paper. The term immigrant is widely used in the educational literature but for the purposes mentioned above the preferred term is "international relocatee," therefore, the clarification is crucial at this stage.

The figure below is a visual representation of what the umbrella term "international relocatee" entails:

Figure 1.

The definition of the term "international relocatee."



Regardless of the immigration status and the type of visa international families obtain to come to the United States, the transition and adaptation period in their new home is not easy. The process of adjustment to a new country, a new language, and unfamiliar customs and traditions is stressful for families and more so for the children (Igoa 1995; Suarez-Orozco, Abu-Zena, & Marks, 2015), as their pre-immigration upbringing and life experience influence their adjustment to life in a new country (Igoa, 1995; Leon, 2014; Linton & Herskovits,1936; Lueck & Wilson, 2011; Redfield, Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Tores, 2010). The same is true for parents. They also go through a period of cultural transition while trying to integrate their former experiences with new information, which might be in conflict with their long-held beliefs (Li et al., 2016; Leon, 2014).

Thus, the involvement of parents in supporting the well-being and educational needs of young children both at home and at school during the transition from the home country to a host

country and the adaptation period is crucial (Antony-Newman, 2018a; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). The difficulties faced by parents can affect the children in daily family life, which also has an impact on the way parents connect with their child's school (Turney & Kao, 2010; Singh, Sylvia, & Ridzi, 2015).

There is ample evidence to illustrate that if international children receive adequate support from parents at home and educators in the school setting, as well as from the local community, they are more likely to succeed academically and socially in their new host country (e.g., Carreón, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Crossnoe & Ansari 2015; Durand 2010; Isik-Ercan 2018; Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti 2005; Jeynes 2003; Li 2016; Lyutykh, Strickland, Fasoli, & Adera, 2016; McWayne, Melzi, Limlingan, & Schick, 2016; Reyes & Haines, 2018; Singh, Sylvia, & Ridzi, 2015; Suizzo, 2014; Tobin, 2016; Tobin, Arzubiaga, & Adair, 2013).

Therefore, parental involvement in the early learning and development of young children remains one of the most crucial areas for further research. Identifying authentic ways to build home-school relationships that fulfill the needs of international relocatee parents is a task being pursued by multiple researchers (Adair, 2012; Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2012; Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016; Li, 2012; Tobin et al., 2013, 2016). Having a better understanding of how and why international relocatee parents do what they do in the context of their children's early learning and development has the potential for providing researchers, practitioners, and policy makers with the insight that can inform practices and policies, as well as future research in early childhood education and the field of home, school, and community partnerships.

Statement of the Problem

In the era of increasing diversity within the United States, it is vital to understand and acknowledge how parents perceive their roles and responsibilities in the education of their young

children. The Migration Policy Institute (2020) reports that in 2019, 24.3% of the 23.6 million children under age 5 in the United States lived with at least one immigrant parent. However, the number may in fact be higher as it does not reflect the number of non-immigrants, refugee/asylees, and undocumented migrants. The implications of these numbers are perplexing for early childhood programs and public school systems in the U.S., which currently educate over 23.6 million children of immigrant descent (Migration Policy Institute, 2020).

Looking at these numbers, it is clear that a significant percentage of the children enrolled in preschools in the United States are children of recently arrived international relocatee families. For families with young children who have recently immigrated to the United States, preschool is often the first context in which they encounter differences between the culture of home and the culture of their new country (Gay, 2010; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Tobin et al., 2013; 2016; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). When international relocatee parents enroll their children in preschool, they are often not totally aware of the new school's culture, the educational expectations, and prevailing norms (Crossnoe & Ansari, 2015; Ma et al., 2016; Tobin, 2016). As a result, international relocatee parents struggle to understand the expectations the school has for them and the goals the school has for their children's education. They also question "to whom they can express their own questions and concerns" (Tobin, 2016, p.10).

International relocatee parents may have difficulties in working with their children's schools, which don't have sufficient resources to build partnerships and accommodate the needs of newly arrived parents. The psychological and cultural mismatch between parents and their children's new school staff's expectations, restricted opportunities for interaction, unfamiliarity with a new school system, and limited understanding of parents' role in an American school create barriers between international relocatee parents and school (Antony-Newman, 2018a;

Calzada, 2015; Durand, 2011; Guerra & Nelson, 2013; Johnson et al, 2016; Lee & Manning, 2001; Lee, 2003; Yao, 1988; Swap, 1987, 1993).

Due to these and many other barriers, the mainstream school officials see international relocatee parents as not being connected to their children's school. There are many studies (e.g., Harper & Pelletier, 2010; Lee & Manning, 2001; Pelletier & Brent, 2002) which demonstrate that international parents tend to have a lower level of involvement in their children's school or early childhood services. When international relocatee parents are not physically present at school, it may be wrongly interpreted by the schools as a sign of lack of parental interest and involvement (Beauregard, Petrakos, & Dupont, 2014). Moreover, teachers who are unfamiliar with the cultural background of international relocatee parents often interpret their parenting as deficient and tend to devalue their parental involvement (Andrews, 2013; Amigo, 2016).

The same problem occurs on the school side as well. The public school system in the U.S., along with early childhood education and child care centers, are left alone with the task of developing coherent approaches and finding out how to best serve international relocatee families and their children. In order for a school, early childhood education, or child care center to develop appropriate programs to promote parental involvement, schools and teachers must have a clear understanding of the parents' perceptions of their involvement practices in the educational process of their young child, their recent and prior experiences with child education and development and child-rearing practices, expectations they have for their young children, as well as their cultural, social, and economic background (Johnson et al., 2016; Larocque, Kleiman, & Darling, 2011; Poza, Brooks, & Valdés, 2014). It will help tremendously if schools and teachers learn directly from international relocatee parents' perspectives and experiences about "what works" and "does not work" (Young, 1936) in adjusting to the host society and

integrating their child into a new school system (Altschul, 2011; Isik-Ercan, 2018; Sohn & Wang, 2006).

However, this phenomenon is not new. Immigrant parents' disengagement with school has its roots in the history of the U.S. In 1936, the scholar Pauline V. Young clearly stated,

> [T]he situation with immigration has been complicated by the fact that schools and social agencies have attempted to solve problems of the immigrants without the adequate knowledge of life within the immigrant community and without… research, which would provide them with the knowledge of 'what works' and 'does not work' in the adjustment of the immigrant. (Young, 1936, p. 429 as cited in Suarez-Orozco et al, 2015)

Therefore, this study aims to learn directly from international relocatee parents' perceptions of their parental involvement practices used to support the early learning and development of their young child in the host society. Understanding how international relocatee parents define their involvement practices and why they view these involvement practices as important to the development and early education of their young children will help to create an inclusive parental involvement framework. This framework will be founded on the strength-based perspective which is culturally responsive and supported by the knowledge learned about, with, and from parents (Boutte & Johnson, 2014). In other words, the concept for the new framework gained as a result of this study will emphasize the significance of shared responsibility among school, families, and communities (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001, p.66), and view parents as co-partners, co-communicators, co-supporters, co-learners, and co-decision makers (Christenson & Sheridan, 2001).

Clearly, gaps exist in the current literature on parental involvement particularly in regard to involving parents from minoritized backgrounds. Much research has delved into the academic

performance and school adjustment of children in immigrant families (Ye & Jiang, 2014; Wilder, 2014). However, research to obtain an understanding of the challenges of immigrant families, including how they support the early learning and development of their young children at home and school, is limited.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine international relocatee parents' perspectives of parental involvement practices used to support the early learning and development of their young children. The study will add to the existing literature on home-school community partnerships, drawing on real life experiences, stories, and practices the international relocatee parents utilize in regard to supporting the early learning and development of their young children. Specifically, this study will focus on how international relocatee parents whose children are enrolled in a Midwestern University laboratory school located in the United States conceptualize and act upon their definitions of parent involvement as a way of supporting their young children's education and development. This study proposes a channel for future research and research design through analysis and interpretation of the issues that are deemed relevant by international relocatee parents. This is one of the few studies to explore the cross-cultural differences amongst the international relocatee parents in relation to their parental involvement practices and child rearing beliefs.

The findings of this study will have the potential for giving early childhood education service practitioners and administrators a broader outlook concerning the various needs of international relocatee parents and their children and ways to be culturally responsive to those needs. Ultimately, programs and initiatives are needed to support the development and academic success of international relocatee children in early education programs. Learning more about

what international relocatee parents can bring to school, as well as how they support the early learning and development of their young children at home, in school, and in community, can inform the creation of more nuanced and targeted parental involvement programs.

In conclusion, it must be noted that although there is a huge emphasis in early childhood research on the collaboration between home, school, and community (Epstein, 2001; Martin & Hagan-Burke, 2002), international relocatee parents' experiences and perspectives are not fully explored by mainstream research on family–school connections in relation to what parents can offer (Isik-Ercan, 2018) or how they can be viewed as experts in the early learning and development of their young children.

Research Questions

- In what ways are international relocatee parents involved in their young children's early learning and development?
- What are the parental involvement practices identified by the international relocatee parents and why do they deem these important to the early learning and development of their young children?
- What are the cross-cultural similarities and differences amongst international relocatee parents in regard to parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs?

Theoretical Framework

My experiences as an international student growing up in an Eastern Central Asian culture but living most of my adult life as a parent in a Western U.S. culture suggest that culture is at the root of all human development (Rogoff, 2003).

Since the core of this study is learning and understanding the international relocatee parents' perspectives on parental involvement practices in their young children's early learning environment, it is vital to understand the cultural frameworks (Gonzalez-Mena, 1997) or cultural regularities (Rogoff, 2003) that direct their choices of everyday involvement practices. Therefore, I drew upon a blend of sociocultural theories as discussed by Rogoff (2003) and funds of knowledge as interpreted by Moll et al. (2005) to support the construction of my study. Both theories represent the sociocultural approach that is inspired by Vygotsky's (1976) cultural-historical psychology, which highlights "how cultural practices and resources mediate the development of thinking" (Moll et al., p.4). While the term culture lies at the heart of sociocultural theory, it is vital to provide the definition of the culture from both theorists.

According to Moll et al. (2005),

> Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. (Moll et al., 2005, p. 33)

Rogoff (2003) views human development in itself as a cultural process and defines culture as "a routine way of doing things in any community's approach to living …people develop as participants in cultural communities" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 3).

The funds of knowledge sociocultural perspective asserts that:

> You can't remove from your cultural framework, from the ways you relate to children and manage their behavior, plan a curriculum, set up the environment, handle care giving routines...your behaviors are determined by your values, which are cultural, familial, and individual. (Gonzalez-Mena, 1997, p. 9)

In addition, this theoretical lens supports the idea that everyone (parents, siblings, caregivers) involved in the early education and development of a young child is a cultural being and their involvement practices are based on the various cultural backgrounds they possess (Cooper & Hedges, 2014).

In the same vein, funds of knowledge concept focusing on "household functioning" can serve as the primary unit of the study, as this research looks more specifically at what informs the parental involvement practices of international relocatee parents. Household functioning as defined by Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti (2005) is what households actually do and how they think about what they do (p. 10). As stated by Moll et al. (2005), "This concept helps make sense of and give meaning to cultural objects and social practices in a particular way and within the concrete circumstances of life in which we find them" (p. 277).

The socio-cultural historical perspective interpreted by Rogoff (2003) states, "Humans develop through their changing participation in the socio-cultural activities of their communities, which also change" (p. 11). In addition, this perspective highlights how culture matters in particular time and place by using a model that emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between individuals and the community/communities in which they are involved. Rogoff seeks to understand how the present situation is based on the knowledge and experiences from the past and how these experiences are passed down and used to adapt to current situations. Rogoff (2003) states, "people's performance depends in large part on the circumstances that are routine in their community and on the cultural practices they are used to…what they do depends in important ways on the cultural meaning given to the events…" (p. 6).

Thus, applying a socio-cultural historical perspective elaborated by Rogoff (2003) and Moll et al., (2005) to study the parent involvement practices of international relocatee parents

makes sense, as it gives an opportunity for this study to be "bounded" in cultural practice (Gutierrez & Rogoff, 2003). Moreover, sociocultural theory supports the idea that institutional and social contexts play an important role in individual learning (Reese et al., 1995) and provides a framework for the cultural and educational experiences of children from international relocatee parents in United States' schools (Isik-Ercan, 2018; McMillian, 2020). Furthermore, incorporating these two socio-cultural perspectives helped the researcher gain a better understanding of what Moll et al. (1992, 2005) suggest is the locally and historically rooted knowledge of international relocatee parents.

Utilizing the socio-cultural perspective to analyze the data is one way to ensure that all cultures are represented and the rationale behind their choices of parental involvement is clearly defined. It has to be noted though until recently, very little attention has been paid to international relocatee parents' beliefs, attitudes, and experiences as they actively support the early learning and development of their young children. The paucity of information that does exist often presents international relocatee parents from a deficit-based perspective. They are portrayed as incompetent, not being involved in school activities, and not caring about the education of their young children (Kroeger, 2014; Morales-Alexander, 2016; Nieto & Bode, 2008).

In summary, it needs to be noticed that the voices of international relocatee parents speaking about their experiences of raising and educating young children in a new country are just starting to emerge in the field of early childhood education. Therefore, applying the ideas embedded within Rogoff's (2003) approach to sociocultural theory and funds of knowledge as a conceptual framework not only has the potential for providing a more dynamic and complex view of culture but serves as a way to share the stories of international relocatee parents.

At the same time, framing international relocatee parents' lived experiences in regard to the ways they are involved in the early learning and development of their young children within a sociocultural framework helped the researcher to gain a better understanding of cultural differences and similarities that exist between various cultural groups within international parents. This study presents various stories based on the cultural background of each group. However, the "difference" should not be conflated with "better" or "worse." As it was observed by Rogoff (2003), "What may be done one way in one community may be done another way in another community, with the same effect, and a practice done the same way in both communities may serve different ends" (p. 12). Therefore, it is important to give voice to international relocatee parents and it is vital to understand international relocatee parents' cultural-bound child rearing and involvement practices in order to better understand "what households actually do and how they think about what they do" (Moll et al., p. 10).

Definition and Abbreviations of Terms

Asylees and Refugees: "Individuals who are unable or unwilling to return to their country of origin or nationality because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution. Refugees and asylees are eligible for protection in large part based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion" ((Monin, Batalova, & La, 2021).

Culture: "Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them" (Moll et al., 2005, p. 33).

English Language Learners (ELL)*: "*Students who speak a language other than English at home" (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015, p. 166).

Emergent Bilinguals/Multilinguals: Students who have learned their first/second language(s) at home and are also learning English at school (Grosjean, 1998).

First-generation Immigrants: Any U.S. born child whose parents were born outside the United States (Child Trends, 2018).

Dual Language Learners (DLL): Children who are learning two or more languages (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015, p. 167).

Funds of Knowledge: "Historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133).

Host Country: A country which is the target destination of immigration.

International Baccalaureate (IB): "The International Baccalaureate education aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect" (ibo.org).

Intercultural Competence: "The ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247).

Immigrant: "Those individuals who voluntarily relocate for long-term resettlement who are mainly 'pulled' toward a new country by social, economic and political forces" (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001, p. 23).

Immigrant Children: Children who have at least one foreign-born parent (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

International Relocatee Parents: "The population of parents who have relocated to the United States as immigrants, refugees, families awaiting asylum, international students, and visiting

scholars" (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021).

International (Foreign) Student: "Persons admitted by a country other than their own, usually under special permits or visas, for the specific purpose of following a particular course of study in an accredited institution of the receiving country" (Douglas, Cetron, & Spiegel, 2019).

Low-Income: Refers to individuals or families earning less than twice the federal poverty level, with family size and the total yearly income of all working household members being used to assess eligibility (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

Long-term migrant: "A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least a year (12 months), so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence. From the perspective of the country of departure, the person will be a long-term emigrant, and from that of the country of arrival, the person will be a long-term immigrant" (Douglas, Cetron, & Spiegel, 2019).

Migrant: A person who leaves his/her country of origin to seek residence in another country (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

Non-immigrant: Non-immigrants are foreign nationals admitted into the United States for specific, temporary purposes. Examples of such temporary purposes include tourism, work, study, participation in an exchange program, representing a foreign government or international organization, and accompanying a principal non-immigrant as an immediate family member or, in some cases, as a member of the principal non-immigrant's staff (Baker, 2018).

Parent: The mother, father, or legal guardian of a child, who has the most contact with the school about the student (Epstein & Salinas, 1993).

Permanent or Conditional Residents/ Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs): Those who have a

"green card." A green card holder, or lawful permanent resident, is someone who has been granted authorization to live and work in the United States on a permanent basis (Migration Policy Institute, 2021).

Second Generation Immigrant: Any U.S.-born child whose parents were born in the United States or its territories, but whose grandparents were born abroad (Child Trends, 2018).

School-related Activities: Includes Open House events, Title I events, school committees, parent-teacher nights, and parent-teacher conferences (Cowan & Edwards, 2005, p. A-54).

Short-term migrant: "A person who moves to a country other than that of his or her usual residence for a period of at least three months but less than a year (12 months) except in cases where the movement to that country is for purposes of recreation, holiday, visits to friends or relatives, business, medical treatment or religious pilgrimage" (Douglas, Cetron, & Spiegel, 2019).

Sojourn: This term is defined as temporary stay in a new place. It happens voluntarily for an unspecified period of time. Although there are no fixed criteria for defining the sojourn according to the duration of time, six months to five years are commonly cited parameters. Therefore, international students who generally remain overseas for the duration of their diplomas or degrees correspond to this category. In most cases, sojourners expect to return home after the completion of their assignment, contract or studies (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001 p. 143).

Undocumented: People who are in the country without permission to work, or illegally (U.N. General Assembly, 1967).

U.S. Citizen: People who were either born in the U.S. or who have become "naturalized" after three or five years as a permanent resident (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

Summary

It is noteworthy to consider the role parents play in the lives and education of their young children. Parent involvement has been widely studied and discussed in the literature as the main factor in children's educational achievement and as one of the benchmarks for multicultural education (Banks, 2013). Even though the educational research emphasizes the collaboration between home and school (Epstein et al., 2018), international relocatee parents are expected to follow the traditional frameworks for parent involvement that are aligned with White, middle class cultural values and rituals (Isik-Ercan, 2018). Therefore, some mainstream public school parental involvement practices in the U.S. might hinder international relocatee parents involvement with schools if the emphasis remains on traditional methods such as physical participation in and/or organizing school events (Antony-Newman, 2020; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). Thus, this study's focus on understanding parent involvement from the perspective of international relocatee parents will assist the field of home, school, and community partnerships in developing alternative practices (Isik-Ercan, 2018) that are inclusive for all parents.

In the following sections, I discuss emerging demographic trends in the U.S. student population as well as issues related to international relocatee parental involvement in the education of their young children in their host country. I then provide a detailed description of the qualitative methods used in collecting and analyzing the data of the study. The final chapters include the main findings of the study as well as the discussions of the findings, implications and recommendations for future studies.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In this review of the literature, I begin by reporting the demographic shifts in the North American student population over the past fifteen years and the slow response to these changes in the field of home, school, and community partnerships and early childhood education. I also give attention to some of the difficulties in accurately identifying and describing the definitions and dimensions of parent involvement. Further, I discuss what predicts parental involvement and what factors hinder effective parental involvement at home, in school, and in community. I then move to addressing the issues on international parental involvement and what research says about their involvement in the early learning and education of young children in the U.S. context. Following this, I present the importance of a strength-based approach in working with international families. Finally, the current research and future trajectories of home, school, and community partnerships field in the U.S. early childhood education contexts is summarized.

Demographics Shifts in Immigrant Populations and the Emergent Need in the Field of Home School Community Partnerships

The United States has been the top destination for international migrants since at least 1960, with one-fifth of the world's migrants (documented and undocumented) living in this country as of 2017 (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). Despite its long history of immigration, the government officials of the United States simultaneously perceive immigration as a valuable resource and a major challenge (Borjas, 2013; Jensen & Sawyer, 2013; Pew Research Center, 2017).

Currently, immigration to the United States has reached historic numbers. According to the Migration Policy Institute (2019), 44.5 million immigrants (both authorized and

unauthorized) live in the United States as of 2017 (Zong, Batalova, & Burrows, 2019). Moreover, 258 million international migrants were counted globally in 2017 – people residing in a country other than their country of birth. This represented 3.4% of the world's total population (Global Migration Trends, 2018).

Immigrants and their U.S.-born children (first generation of immigrants) now number approximately 86.4 million people, or 27 % of the overall U.S. population, according to the 2017 Current Population Survey (CPS, 2017). The state of Ohio is home to a growing community of immigrants. As of 2017, immigrants make up about 4.5% of Ohio residents, while a similar share of residents are native-born U.S. citizens who have at least one immigrant parent (Migration Policy Institute, 2016).

This rapid increase in the immigrant family population should bring renewed attention to the field of early childhood education and home, school, and community partnerships. Many of the immigrant families and their children are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse, and most have limited or no English skills at all, while others have lived here for many years but are still developing their English language skills and learning the new cultural norms (Tobin, 2016).

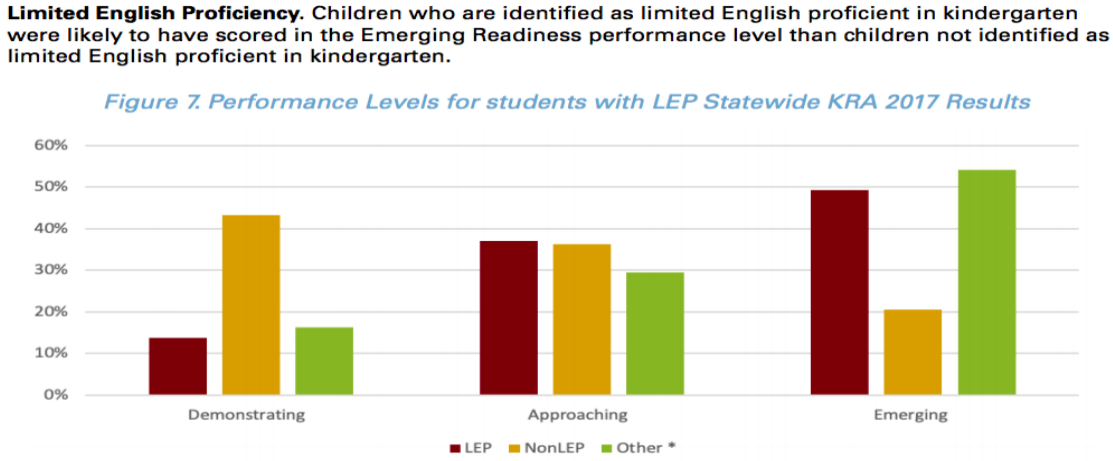
Therefore, the growth of the culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse population has become a concern for the U.S. education system. Families who cannot communicate with their children's school in English are labeled "not involved" and "not caring about their children's education" (Howard, 2003; Kroeger, 2014; Portes & Rumbaut, 2006), and the children who cannot communicate in English because their primary language is not English are labeled as "Limited English Proficient", or LEP, or "English Language Learners", or ELL (Edvantia, 2009).

While the young ELL enrollment continues to rise in the U.S. public schools, teachers, researchers, and policymakers are beginning to observe concerning trends in the academic performance of these students. In particular, their limited literacy skills are preventing them from participating fully in kindergarten. The most recently published results of the Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA) reveal significant gaps between the kindergarten readiness of ELLs, i.e., children of immigrants, and non-ELLs in the state of Ohio.

In fact, among the 118,113 kindergarten students in Ohio in fall 2017 who took the complete Kindergarten Readiness Assessment, the subgroups most likely to demonstrate readiness to engage with kindergarten-level instruction included girls and white non-Hispanic children. Children with disabilities were more likely to score in the emerging readiness category overall as compared to the students without disabilities. The same is true of children with limited English proficiency as compared to their English proficient counterparts. Children in families with higher incomes demonstrated readiness at higher levels than their economically disadvantaged peers overall (KRA, 2017). This means that 50% of young ELLs in the state of Ohio did not demonstrate kindergarten readiness to engage with kindergarten level of instruction and remain in the emerging section. In fact, children who are “emerging” as can be seen from the dark bar in the “Emerging column” require substantial targeted supports and services to engage with the kindergarten curriculum.

Figure 2:

Performance Levels of LEP and Non-LEP students



Source: Kindergarten Readiness Assessment Report (2017).

In addition, children who enter kindergarten substantially behind their peers may continue to fall behind through their school years. Focusing on these students before they enter kindergarten may help prevent or reduce this achievement gap. Therefore, these statistics are not only concerning but represent an emerging need both in the field of early childhood education as well as home, school, and community partnerships. Since parental involvement is highly linked to student academic achievement, researchers need to determine what can be done to support the immigrant families and their young children to achieve better academic milestones starting from the early childhood and gain overall success later in their lives.

Dimensions and Definitions of Parental Involvement

According to Hill et al (2004), parental involvement refers to the parent's interaction with the child and the school to promote educational success. For several decades, research in student success has shown parental involvement as one of the factors to affect cognitive and behavioral

outcomes of children across socio-economic sectors and ethnic groups (Epstein, 2010; Fan & Chen, 2001; Hill & Taylor, 2004; McNeal, 1999; Yoder & Lopez, 2013; Wilder, 2014).

Parental involvement is a multidimensional construct that includes cognitive, affective, and behavioral facets of parenting which are related to children's education (Clarke, 2001; Fan & Chen, 2001; Garcia Coll et al., 2002; Goodall, 2013; Grolnick & Slowiaczek, 1994; Grolnick, 2016). Roughly, parental involvement could be classified into family-based activities (setting expectations, monitoring child's progress, helping with homework, discussing schools) and school-based activities (volunteering, attending parent-teacher conferences, and serving on parent councils), and academic socialization refers to parenting strategies which communicate the importance of education, expectations, and encouragement to the child (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Epstein et al., 2018; Gonzalez, 2013; Seginer, 2006; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

In fact, given the breadth of the parental involvement construct, there is no consistent or single definition or term to describe parental involvement (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2012; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lau, Li, & Rao, 2012; Shen, Washington, Bierlein Palmer, & Xia, 2014; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). However, there are different terms used to describe how parents are involved in their children's education and how schools help parents to become more involved in school. Terms like parent engagement (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Goodall & Montgomery, 2013; Kurani et al., 2009; Pushor, 2010), parent participation (Edwards & Kutaka, 2015; Zhang, 2015), parent-school engagement (Lea, Thompson, McRae-Williams, & Wegner, 2011; Saltmarsh, Barr, & Chapman, 2014; Share & Kerrins, 2013), parent academic involvement (Hill et al., 2004), parent-school collaboration (Ishimaru, Lott, Fajardo, & Salvador, 2014), parent-school involvement (Im, Hughes, & West, 2016), parental school engagement (Gavidia-Payne, Denny, Davis, Francis, & Jackson, 2015) and family-school-community partnership (Epstein, 1992;

Fleharty & Edwards, 2013; Sheridan et al, 2011). Regardless of the construct used, all these terms imply a shared responsibility between the home, school and community contexts in helping the holistic development of a child (Edwards & Kutaka, 2015).

Researchers have also recognized that parental involvement comes in many forms. One of the leading scholars in the field of parental involvement, Epstein (1995, 2001) developed a typology that consists of six dimensions of parental involvement, namely parenting (providing parents with resources and skills to help them foster child development at home), home-school communication (open, two-way, meaningful communication between home and school), home learning activities (parents' involvement in children's learning such as helping with homework), volunteering at school (school seeking assistance from parents and parents providing assistance during school functions), decision-making (involving parents in school management decisions), and collaborating with the community (resources in the community are utilized to promote children's learning). This model illustrates the importance of fostering connections and collaboration among parents, students, teachers, and other people in the community in order to facilitate better academic achievement and the well-being of a child (Epstein et al, 2018; Goodall, 2013).

In like manner, the scholarly work developed by Fan, Williams, & Wolters (2012) focused on five dimensions of parental involvement – parental educational aspiration, parental advising (providing advice on what courses to take), parental participation in school functions (attending parent-teacher organization meetings), parent-school contact concerning student school problems (communicating about child's poor performance, whether initiated by the parent or the school), and parent-school contact concerning benevolent school issues (communication regarding school programs, whether initiated by the parent or the school).

It is crucial however to distinguish between the two types of communication and it is important to clarify contradicting effects of home-school communication found in past research where more frequent communication with teachers is related to poorer academic performance (Fan et al., 2012). Fan et al. (2012) maintained that teachers do reach out to parents more often, and vice versa, when students have academic and or/behavioral problems in the first place.

According to Sheridan, Knoche, & Edwards (2016), the types of parental involvement can also be categorized into types of relationships school and/or teachers have with parents – disconnected relationship, parent involvement, and parents and teachers as partners. The first type referred to as disconnected relationship pertains to when the home and the school each has its own distinct role and teachers are believed to be the primary caretaker of educating the children. The second type, parental involvement, refers to when parents are encouraged to be involved in school affairs, but the emphasis still remains on the school's role. Lastly, parent-teacher partnership is characterized by parents and teachers' joint commitment in optimizing the child's learning experience. The home and the school as well as local community share the responsibilities and make mutual decisions about how to best support the child. In theory, the parent-teacher partnership should be the most effective in positively influencing children's school outcomes. However, schools are facing many barriers to effectively implement the parent-teacher partnership in particular when it comes to immigrant family involvement.

What predicts family involvement in general, why it matters and where immigrant families fit in the U.S. paradigm of parental involvement is discussed in the following sections of the literature review.

Predictors of Parental Involvement

Families play an enormous role in the negotiation process of their young children's schooling. The meaningful involvement of families in their children's early learning and development leads to school readiness and later academic success, suggested by a growing body of research (e.g. Caspe & Lopez, 2006; Henrich & Gadaire, 2008; Jeynes, 2012, 2018). Moreover, studies demonstrate the importance of parents in children's early learning and development (Goodall & Ghent, 2014), emphasizing the experiences children are having at home (Wang, 2014), and understanding the power of parent-teacher relationships in combining their efforts to support children's learning (Murray, Mereoiu, & Handyside, 2013).

The relationship between the school and family starts when a child is enrolled in an early care or preschool program. The position statement of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC, 2009) on developmentally appropriate practice for programs serving children from birth to age eight suggests that "understanding children's development requires viewing each child within the socio-cultural context of that child's family, educational setting, and community, as well as within the broader society" (p. 13). As early childhood education is considered from birth to age eight, families, especially parents/guardians, become the main source of information for school. The younger the child is, the more crucial it is for preschool teachers to obtain the information about the child through building relationships with families and vice versa for the families to be involved in the early education of a young child (Swamp, 1993, 1987; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2011; Suizzo, 2014). Thus, it is important to explore and examine multiple factors in order to understand what influences parental involvement.

The model introduced by Hoover-Dempsey et al. (2005) explains three elements that contribute to parental involvement. The first element is parental motivation, which includes

efficacy beliefs and role construction. Efficacy refers to the belief that personal actions will effectively help the child and role construction includes the parent's perception of responsibility regarding the child's schooling. The second element is invitations to involvement from the school, teacher, and student. Invitations from these three sources are important as they suggest that actively participating in the child's schooling is welcomed and valued. The third element pertains to the parents' life contexts such as socioeconomic status and parent's knowledge and skills, and how these resources, or lack of, influence practices related to their children's education. The following sections discuss these elements in more detail.

Child Factors

The academic success and well-being of a child are the main reasons for the parents to be involved in the early education and development of their young child, in particular, during the early years. Some of the most important cognitive development happens during the first five years of life (Becker, Klein, & Biedinger, 2013; Shonkoff, 2010). Therefore, by taking an active role in the early childhood education process, parents can help ensure that their children have all the support they need to develop to their full potential.

Parents are role models for their child, and their actions and words are being watched and absorbed by their children. Therefore, if children see their parents' interest in learning and that parents are involved in their education at school, they feel valued and excited. As stated by an international parent who was teaching in the U.S. preschool,

> I saw what happened when parents were involved in my classroom. I saw how their children reacted, how other children reacted and how parents reacted. I saw the difference, so I think it comes with a magic. When parents come to school or get involved

> with the curriculum, children get excited and they tell everybody that their parents came to school. Children feel valued. (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019, slide #4)

In the light of this evidence, parental involvement at school creates a positive experience for children and helps to extend teaching outside the classroom. Involvement at home is also crucial as parents who are aware of what is happening in their child's preschool classroom or child care facility are better able to establish a connection between what is learned at school and what takes place in the home. Thus, this connection is a key component of a child's development and supports further learning (Crosby et al, 2014; Crowley, & Wheeler, 2014; Cherng & Ho, 2018).

School and Teacher Factors

Schools and teachers are the main contributors of parental involvement. In a multi-ethnic study sample in the U.S., researchers found that when schools do not take on genuine efforts to make parents feel that they are welcomed partners (Park & Holloway, 2013), parents are less inclined to be involved. According to Sukhbaatar (2014), when teachers possess negative attitudes and show discriminatory behavior toward children who they see coming from a deficit background, parents are less likely to engage in school-based involvement. On the other hand, Epstein (1991) asserted that when teachers initiate and try to improve communication with parents, parents become more involved.

Specialized programs offered by the school can also increase parental involvement. For example, in Colombia, schools offer an English language training to parents of children who are learning English as a second language. Helping parents learn English, in turn, made parents more able to help their children with English homework (Castillo & Gamez, 2013). Likewise, in Singapore, parent training programs are well attended because training sessions are conducted in two languages– English and the parents' mother tongue. Additionally, trainings are held at times

when parents are not working (Clarke, 2001). These effective school strategies lend support to the assertion that efforts of the school to involve parents is a better predictor of involvement than household income or parent's educational background (Jeynes, 2005, as cited in Westerman, 2012).

Challenges on the teachers' part can also hinder parental involvement. Teachers and school staff are often overloaded with teaching and administrative tasks (Cohen & Brown, 2016; Colley, 2014; Duch, 2005; Kabir & Akter, 2014), leaving them with little time to reach out and engage with parents. Although teachers are expected to initiate communication between the school and the home, their regular work responsibilities and language and cultural barriers when it comes to immigrant families limit their time and ability to encourage parental involvement and partnership (Park & Holloway, 2013).

In fact, many teachers enter the profession without necessary preparation for a working in such an increasingly diversified environment. They do not possess the necessary skills, dispositions, and knowledge most essential in the current schools due to the "clash of cultures" (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012) that is happening inside of the American classrooms, where a monolingual, white, low or middle class female teacher faces an increasingly diverse student body. Cushner (2012) brings to attention another critical point that "teachers tend to be culturally-bound, [and] have little knowledge or experience with people from other cultures, which limits their ability to interact effectively with students that are different from them" (p. 18).

Teachers' beliefs also matter. For example, a study in Turkey found that teachers think that parents do not want to get involved. As such, they do not exert effort to involve them (Hakyemez, 2015; Pettit, 2011). In Denmark, although parents are recognized to be involved in

informal school functions (e.g., social meetings, excursion trips), many teachers have expressed that it is difficult to engage and involve parents in formal education decision making mainly because they are not used to doing so (Ravn, 1998). The same study suggested that teachers need to develop creative and effective communication with families and communities in order for parents to be more involved. A study in Canada also mentioned that teachers and principals are hesitant to share their authority and decision-making power with parents (McKenna & Willms, 1998), leading to a decline in parental involvement. This is similar to findings in the Middle Eastern country Saudi Arabia where most public schools operate in isolation. Al-Gharaibeh (2012, as cited in Dubis & Bernadowski, 2015) argued that some officials in Saudi Arabia's schools do not believe in parental involvement, and so they operate in isolation and reject any external involvement from homes or communities.

Language and Cultural Factors

Language and culture are two of the main factors that have an impact on parental involvement, especially for families who are linguistically and culturally diverse. Culture provides a context that helps explain why parents are using various parenting practices. Culture influences parental cognitions which include goals and expectations for the child, beliefs about childrearing and education, and perception of what the child needs (Durand, 2011; Edwards & Kutaka, 2015; Harkness & Super, 2006)

Not having English Language skills is another major factor that inhibits the involvement of international parents in the schooling of their children. When parents are limited themselves with the English language, there is not much support they can provide to their child who is attending English medium school in the U.S. (Jafarov, 2015; Turney & Kao, 2009). However,

international relocatee parents support their young children in the pursuit of speaking two or more languages and have a strong desire to raise their children bilingual or multilingual.

Benefits of bilingualism. International parents have a strong desire for their young children to master the English language as well as maintain their home language. Being able to learn and speak more than one language at an early age is very important as this skill allows children to explore the world and the diversity it represents (Garcia, 1997). Being able to speak more than one language opens children's minds to think about things from a variety of perspectives, expand their background knowledge, enhances their mental development, imagination, thinking, and reading later in life (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013). In addition, bilingualism promotes increased cognitive advantages, communicative sensitivity, and metalinguistic awareness as stated by Garcia (1997),

> Students who are bilingual and bi-literate have been shown to have increased cognitive advantages, such as more divergent and creative thinking, greater metalinguistic awareness and cognitive control of the linguistic process and increased communicative sensitivity. In addition to cognitive advantages, bilingualism and bi-literacy can bring about greater understanding among groups and increased knowledge of each other. (p. 409)

It was also emphasized by linguists (Bialystok, Craik, & Luk, 2012) that children immersed in two language systems learn slowly at the outset, using two languages to express one thing during the learning process; however, bilingual children's cognitive ability is stronger than that of monolingual children because of their metalinguistic understanding. Metalinguistic understanding is the awareness and control of linguistic components of language, i.e., the ability

to think and discuss language (Byers-Heinlein & Lew-Williams, 2013) which is an important skill to develop from early years.

Even though being aware of their own cultural identity and ability to speak a home language is highly important for international relocatee parents, having a clear understanding about the host country's cultural norms and ability to interact effectively in this culture is also highly important. Therefore, intercultural competence is another factor that impedes international parents' active participation in their children's school.

Intercultural competence. Intercultural competence (IC) is "the "ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes" (Deardorff, 2006, p. 247). Intercultural competence (IC) is a key component of intercultural understanding (Castro et al., 2013; Cushner, 2012) which is highly important for international relocatee parents and their children's school personnel to develop in order to effectively work together.

Intercultural competence requires effective and appropriate interaction with people who have multilevel cultural identities (Chen & Starosta, 1996); it is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions. It involves knowledge, attitude, skills, and awareness (Deardorff, 2006).

Moreover, research shows that intercultural competence is context dependent and cannot be acquired in a short space of time or in one learning module. A person can develop intercultural communication skills but will not be equally interculturally competent in addressing all cultures. It is not a naturally occurring phenomenon but a lifelong process which needs to be

addressed explicitly in learning and teaching. Despite the time it takes, intercultural competence is a vital component to acquire both for teachers and international parents.

According to Cushner (2012), many teachers in the U.S. mainstream schools do not possess the intercultural competence to work with the international parents and many international parents do not possess the knowledge, skills and attitude to work with their child's new school personnel. Because of that, communication between parents and teachers and parental involvement of international parents in school activities becomes a problem.

Therefore, both teachers and international parents need opportunities to learn about each other's cultures and norms to develop intercultural competence in order to be able to work together. Even though the intercultural education, as a function of its content and pedagogy, is psychologically challenging (Paige, 1993, p. 3), once teachers and parents are in the stage of intercultural encounters, they move from emotional arousal to understanding unfamiliar behaviors to personal adjustment and growth (Cushner et al., 2015). While this process takes time and a great deal of effort, once parents and teachers gain intercultural competence, they will become more open-minded towards each other and have the social and emotional skills to engage with each other, despite any cultural differences (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003).

Immigration status. Research (Borjas, 2006; Jafarov, 2015; Lareau, 2002; Yoshikawa, 2011) has shown that limited access or use of resources (information, social support, financial, educational), which is also known as social capital (Bourdieu, 1987) in the academic literature, has a negative effect on children's development. For many U.S. citizens, the resources that are part of our daily lives such as hospitals, schools, banks, public libraries, and other civic institutions offer common experiences that are often taken for granted. However, the newcomers,

depending on their immigration status (green card holders, international students, visiting scholar, refugee/asylee, or undocumented), do not benefit from the array of resources available that could support their development and overall well-being.

According to Yoshikawa (2011), the lack of resources affects young children most directly at the household level. The access to resources offers families financial flexibility, access to healthcare, freedom to travel, and an array of enriching programs and activities for young children. Being on student visa or being undocumented at all often leads to low paying jobs and financial instability, which creates the context within which most immigrant parents are raising their young children, and it is a stressful context for children's early development (Yoshikawa, 2011).

The everyday experiences of living as an immigrant citizen with particular immigration status that limits the quality of life into very low standards can reduce parents' ability to engage in stimulating learning activities with their children and active involvement in the early learning and overall well-being of their young children. Working long hours can also reduce the actual time parents have to spend with their children engaging in the daily activities that are crucial to young children's development, such as the simple routines of eating, bathing, talking, and other familial traditions. Poverty and economic hardship along with language and cultural barriers and immigration status all can hamper a majority of parents' ability to take part in their children's school activities and remain disconnected from their children's academic world that is taking place at school.

Educational policies. Parental involvement is also affected by larger contexts such as district and/or state policies on education (Trumbull et al., 2003). Government mandates and educational policies, such as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) program in the U.S.,

promotes greater parental involvement (Dumont et al., 2014). Similar trends were also found in other countries. For instance, in Thailand schools are required to include parents and community members on the school board (Daungkaew & Glascock, 2005). Government programs in Australia were also put in place to promote parent-school engagement to help reduce the achievement gap among the indigenous population (Lea et al., 2011). Recently, with a mandate from the Education Law of Mongolia, more efforts are put into getting parents to be more involved and teaching parents how to help their children academically (Sukhbaatar, 2014). This is also similar to the case of Gambia, where the government has a mandate on establishing strong community ties to promote parental involvement (Colley, 2014).

Parent demographic and intrapersonal characteristics. Societal factors such as demographic and economic characteristics are implicated in the nature and extent of parental involvement (Eccles & Harold, 1996). First, household income is an important predictor of parental involvement, with children from high-income families receiving greater parental support. This is a consistent finding in all the studies which accounted for income (Balarin & Santiago, 2007; Chao & Tseng, 2002; Chew, Carter, Chunn, & Jotanovic, 2015; Frewen, Von Otter, 2014; Goldberg, & Padilla, 2013; Hornby & Lafaele, 2011; Ndebele, 2015; Turney & Kao, 2009; Valdez et al., 2012; Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

This trend can also be explained adapting Bourdieu's (1987) perspective on different forms of capital. Parents with lower socioeconomic status may not possess the appropriate social and cultural capital to feel comfortable connecting with the school (Lee & Bowen, 2006). The concept of social capital includes relationships and social networks that provide resources or access to resources (Bourdieu, 1987), and cultural capital with regard to education refers to the parent's ability to promote their children's academic success (Grenfell & James, 1998). Higher

income families have more money and access to information that helps them in assisting their children at home and in school (Balarin & Santiago, 2007). Research has also noted, however, that professional, busy working parents also reported not having enough time to communicate with their children's teachers (Clarke, 2001; Kabir & Akter, 2014; Lau et al., 2012; Share & Kerrins, 2013).

A parent's educational level is also correlated with parental involvement, with those having more years of education being more involved in their child's education across numerous studies. For instance, in a mixed-methods study conducted in Japan, researchers found that highly educated mothers put much effort in researching and selecting which preschool is best for their child. Those with fewer years of education (e.g. high school graduate), on the other hand, were likely to choose a school based on convenience of location and information from family and friends (Yamamoto, Holloway, & Suzuki, 2006). Among Chinese parents with lower educational attainment, it has been found that they may solely rely on teachers because they have less knowledge about educating their children (Lau et al., 2012; Sheng, 2012). In Norway, parents with lower levels of educational attainment attend parent-teacher conferences less often (Paulsen, 2012). According to the social and cultural capital perspective, parents may be limited by their low level of education (Clarke, 2001) and may not be able to provide the academic support their children need (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Trumbull et al., 2003). It is also plausible that parents with poor educational backgrounds may not understand the significance of their role in their children's learning and progress (Karsidi et al., 2014).

Parent gender is also commonly treated as a control variable in many quantitative studies. It is significantly related to parental involvement in different countries (Baeck, 2010; Kabir & Akter, 2014; Kim & Hill, 2015; Sheng, 2012; Paulsen, 2012; Vellymalay, 2012; Zellman et al.,

2014), with mothers being more involved than fathers across all the studies. For example, in Beijing, China, the mothers of secondary students are the ones most directly involved in their children's education, whereas the fathers have a more distant and broader role (Sheng, 2012). In a qualitative study conducted in Bangladesh, rural mothers commonly check on their children's home activities, whereas the fathers are in charge of paying for tuition fees and visiting the school only when teachers ask for a meeting (Kabir & Akter, 2014).

Parent gender, employment status, and social class also interact to influence parental involvement. For example, although fathers in general are less involved compared to mothers, middle-income fathers demonstrate greater involvement compared to their working-class counterparts in China (Sheng, 2012). Also, it was mentioned previously that employed parents have less time to directly participate in their children's schooling. Yet, both working and non-working mothers in Singapore and Bangladesh were found to show greater involvement than fathers (Kabir & Akter, 2014; Clarke, 2001). This pattern can be attributed to traditional parenting roles where mothers remain to be the main figure in childrearing and the fathers are in-charge of financially providing for the family (Hawke, 2007).

The parent's own psychological resource also impacts their involvement. Parent's efficacy in helping their children learn, for example, was found to impact various types of parental involvement in different countries: Japan, China, Greece, New Zealand, United Kingdom, Thailand (Daungkaew & Glascock, 2005), and across cultural groups in the United States (Caucasian America, African American, Latinos, and Asians) (Kirkbride, 2014). High levels of stress also negatively influence the parent's capacity to be involved (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). A study on Latinos in the U.S. found that financial stressors impact school-based parental involvement (Camacho-Thompson, Gillen-O'Neel, Gonzales, & Fuligni, 2016), and family life

stressors (e.g., major life events) limit parents' home-based involvement. The negative effects of increased stress due to poverty on parental involvement were also found across studies on European-American and African American parents (Hill & Taylor, 2004; Robl, Jewell, & Kanotra, 2012; Usher et al., 2012; Wang & Sheikh-Khalil, 2014).

Lastly, depression has also been linked to parental involvement. Parents who experience depression often have a less positive view of their role as a parent and may have less motivation and confidence, which translates to lower involvement (Kirkbride, 2014; Kohl, Lengua, & McMahon, 2010; Valdez et al., 2013). Culture shock (Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, 2001) and the transition to the new norms and realities of the new country can be another major source of depression (Torres, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015) that definitely effects the way parents get involved in their children's learning. Overall, parents with a higher level of well-being have greater inclination to be involved in the school (Baeck, 2010; Suarez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015; Valdez et al., 2013).

Outcomes of Parental Involvement

Parental involvement has been found to play a profound role in children's wellbeing, particularly in academic performance and cognitive development. For example, children displayed improved reading skills when parents encourage reading time at home (Crosby, Rasinski, Padak, & Yildirim, 2014). A meta-synthesis of nine studies also showed that children perform better in mathematics, reading, and spelling when parents tutor them (Wilder, 2013). Parental help with homework benefits numerous learning outcomes, especially when parents are emotionally supportive and encourage children's autonomy (Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). Researchers have also found that parents' attendance in parent-teacher conferences and school events in U.S. public schools is a positive predictor of students' academic progress (Shen,

Washington, Bierlein Palmer, & Xia, 2014). A meta-analysis of 25 studies also showed that parental expectations and educational aspirations are the factors most highly related to children's academic achievement (Fan & Chen, 2001). Finally, in a U.S. sample, parental involvement has been found to positively affect children's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to school, perceived competence, and academic goals (Echaune, Ndiku, & Sang, 2015; El Nokali, Bachman, & Votruba-Drzal, 2011; Gonzalez-DeHass et al., 2005).

How Parental Involvement Influences Child Outcomes

The extant literature also underscores how the different types of parental involvement can impact child outcomes in different ways. In a comprehensive review of related literature, Pomerantz et al. (2007) asserted that parental involvement does not simply have a linear relationship with positive child outcomes and that more involvement does not always mean better outcomes for children. Rather, the effectiveness and benefits of parental involvement depend on *how* (style) parents become involved. The parenting style influences the effect of parenting practices by providing the emotional climate in which the involvement is expressed (Darling & Steinberg, 1993). The role of parenting style is affirmed by Darling and Steinberg (1997) in this statement:

> [P]arenting style moderates the influence of parenting practices on the child's development in at least two ways: by transforming the nature of the parent-child interactions, and thus moderating the specific practice's influence on child outcomes, and by influencing the child's personality, especially the child's openness to parental influence. (p. 493)

When parents are controlling and coercive rather than supportive of children's autonomy in their involvement, they inhibit the opportunities for children to initiate and to solve problems on their

own. They may also deprive the children of feeling capable and independent. Parental involvement can also be described as process- versus person-focused. Process-focused involvement considers the context of skill and motivational development as a process, whereas a person-focused involvement concentrates on the child's personal characteristics (e.g., intelligence) and overlooks the child's efforts to develop (Pomerantz et al., 2007).

With the latter, children may form negative perceptions of themselves and their abilities, especially when receiving criticisms directed to who they are as opposed to what they do. Parental involvement that is characterized by negative affect is also not conducive for children's development. When parents are always annoyed, hostile, stressed, or overly critical rather than supportive and caring, their involvement may send a message that school is taxing and frustrating. This, in turn, may affect the child's attention and enthusiasm around schoolwork.

All these findings imply that examining the quality, and not just quantity, of parental involvement is of utmost importance in understanding how involvement affects the child. For example, instead of simply asking a child "go to your room and do your homework," support and guidance, such as how the parent and child sit and do the homework together, can provide more insights on parental involvement (Balarin & Santiago, 2007; Pomerantz et al., 2007). In sum, the effects of parental involvement on children's development rely heavily on the nature of parental involvement and how it is expressed.

Parental Involvement of International (Immigrant) Parents

A plethora of recent and prior research shows that members of different communities practice different aspects of parental involvement, which impacts their unique set of expectations towards their children, educators, and the curriculum (Adair, 2012, 2015; Amigo, 2016; Ackert, Ressler, Ansari, & Crosnoe, 2018; Jeynes, 2003; Huss-Keeler, 1997; Kim, 2009).

Immigrant parents, whose beliefs and prior educational experiences were shaped in their countries of origin, might experience even more misunderstanding regarding their role in their young children's learning (Turner & Kao, 2009; Suarez-Orozco et al, 2011; Suizzo et al, 2014). In particular, parents who experienced strict boundaries between families and the school view their involvement in school as interfering in the work of teachers (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019; Pena, 2000). Such parents understand school as a hierarchical structure (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019) and view teachers as a valued professional, trusting their expertise in issues of teaching and learning (Tekin, 2016; Tobin et al, 2016; Pena, 2000).

Again, based on immigrant parents' prior educational and cultural backgrounds, other immigrant families emphasize academic involvement at home and believe that they could and should help in the family rather than the school (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009). However, that does not mean that the immigrant parent doesn't want to be involved in school-based activities. Many immigrant parents face challenges to be actively involved in their children's school activities due to their lack of linguistic skills, i.e., English language skills, and most of them are not adequately informed about the host country's education systems and expectations set by schools, i.e., school culture (Jafarov, 2015; Turner & Kao, 2009; Zhou, 1997).

Downward social mobility (Guo, 2009; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019), is another major challenge that affects immigrants who come from middle-class backgrounds in their home countries. As the school systems in the host countries, like the U.S., privilege middle-class parenting practices (Lareau, 2011), working-class immigrant parents remain at a disadvantage in this case. Moreover, the rise of parental involvement policies and parental education programs (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2013; Nawrotzki, 2012) developed based on the governmental agencies' demands put added pressure on parents. As far as parental involvement is a socially

constructed and historically specific practice with its set of winners and losers (Stitt & Brooks, 2014), minority and immigrant parents who do not conform to the normative expectations regarding their involvement are especially disadvantaged (Antony-Newman, 2018b; Jafarov, 2015; Morales-Alexander, 2016; Nam & Park, 2014).

As a matter of fact, the traditional understanding of parental involvement in the Western contexts is based on practices of white, middle-class, native-born parents. Thus, the involvement practices of this group of parents counts as normative by teachers, who also belong to this dominant group (Stitt & Brooks, 2014). This typology of parental involvement not only honors one particular type of parenting over others (Lareau, 2011), but also focuses almost exclusively on academic achievement. Subsequently, different parental involvement strategies utilized by racialized minorities, working-class, and immigrant parents are perceived through the deficit approach, which negatively affects their involvement (Antony-Newman, 2018b; Morales-Alexander, 2016)

The deficit approach perceives parents as inadequate in their role of child-rearers, who need expert advice on parenting and state intervention to ensure that children are taken care of and their educational success is ensured (Berry, 2013; Gillies, 2005, 2007; Lee, 2014). It is evident from the research (e.g., Fernandez & Lopez, 2017) that parenting education programs in particular midwestern states in urban areas are disproportionally aimed at the non-dominant parents, such as Latinx parents.

Researchers (Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013; Isik-Ercan, 2012, 2018; Miller-Marsh & Turner-Vorbeck, 2010; Pushor, 2010), who oppose the deficit approach and espouse the strengths-based approach view parents as agents who can intervene on behalf of their children and resist existing barriers to involvement. One of the promising ways of studying the

strengths of immigrant families is followed by researchers interested in the concept of "funds of knowledge" (FoK), which was originally developed through the anthropological study of Latino/a households in the U.S. (Rios-Aguilar, Kiyama, Gravitt, & Moll, 2011).

The FoK concept defines parental practices, ideas, and values about education predominantly typical of Latino/a working-class immigrants that resist marginalization in the U.S. school system (Olivos & Mendoza, 2009). Another possible practice used at the intersection of research and activism is parent community organizing (Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander, & Hernandez, 2013), when grassroots organizations supported by educational researchers are used to work against the power of bureaucratic organizations (school boards, ministries of education, etc.).

Even though these counteracting approaches to the deficit-view of immigrant parents are a significant step forward in comparison to traditional school-centric parental involvement, the challenge still remains as to what can be done so that practices adopted by the marginalized communities become more valued by the school. In other words, how in the field of education can funds of knowledge be transformed into kindergarten readiness, better grades, higher college enrollment, and other forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1986) which will make the immigrant children and their families an equal counterpart in the U.S. education system.

It is important to note that in present-day schooling in the U.S., the concept capital is connected to class and power (Ball, 2010; Siraj & Mayo, 2014). Therefore, if educators want to bring and use capital of marginalized communities and create inclusive/equal parental involvement programs, then they should try and challenge the unequal power relations that lead to the devaluation of the working-class capital in the first place. The knowledge parents have about their children as stated by Pushor (2015), "parent knowledge", that could be shared with

teachers and enhance the schooling experience of students, has a great potential to turn the Funds of Knowledge/parent knowledge into the capital.

In fact, the traditional parent involvement framework utilized in mainstream U.S public schools barely represents the actual "parent knowledge" and other strengths of immigrant parents (Hughes & Mac Naughton, 2000). For example, Isic-Ercan (2010) found that while Turkish parents viewed themselves as resourceful and able to build on their backgrounds and occupations, they were rarely asked to contribute to school. Even though some parents were able to use their educational strengths and took part in their children's activities at school, "they were denied entree to curriculum decisions and felt they were not viewed as resourceful by teachers" (Isic-Ercan, 2018, p. 71). As stated by one of the research participants Mrs. Deniz, "Turkish parents sometimes feel shy about approaching the teachers with our needs. We assume that we would be offered things and opportunities by default to mediate cultural differences, but we need to create the environment for these exchanges ourselves." (Isik-Ercan, 2018, p. 71).

It must be noted that each of the parents, despite their various backgrounds, possess his or her own "funds of knowledge." However, it is up to the school personnel to explore each person's "funds of knowledge" and utilize this information in making curricular decisions, developing school policies, and choosing instructional strategies (Moll et al, 1992; Gonzalez et al., 2005).

Even though school is trying its best to accommodate the needs of its diverse population and have the support from native-born families, it is vital to have the support from immigrant families as well. As children from both backgrounds come to the same school and become part of "one school," what still has to be done is to bring both families together and become part of that "one school."

The Future of Home, School, and Community Partnerships Field in Regard to International Relocatee Parent Involvement

Research in the field of home, school, and community partnerships in the last fifteen years evolved sufficiently to recognize the need for more authentic partnership work to meet the needs of all students. This is particularly true in regard to working with international families with an immigrant background who do not meet the traditional white, middle-class norms related to family involvement (Ansari et al., 2018; Doucet, 2011; Isik-Ercan, 2018).

According to Guo (2017), there are various ways the educational, cultural, linguistic, religious, financial, and demographic experiences of international families play an important role in their relationship with schools and shape their expectations for educators. These experiences have important implications for school policies. Therefore, it is vital for schools to initiate conversations with diverse parent groups about culturally relevant home-school partnerships (Adair, 2012; Tobin et al, 2016; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019) and learn from real-life stories and ways of involvement directly from international (immigrant) communities (Auerbach, 2011; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019).

Bilingual, bicultural school staff members including teachers with immigrant backgrounds can play an important role in these partnerships (Adair, 2016). School administration can develop policies that will reflect diversity within the school and will particularly encourage active communication and physical presence of international families in school. Moreover, a plethora of research suggests that international families do care (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019), want to be involved in schools, and have high expectations for their young children (Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2012; Li, 2012; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2019; Morales-Alexander, 2016; Orellana, 2016, 2018) but there are many challenges that impact their

involvement with the school activities, including language and socio-cultural differences of the host country.

In summary, it is important to realize that parents can serve as partners with the school and contribute to the teacher's knowledge about children and their communities if they have cultural knowledge (Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2012; Li, 2012; Turney & Kao, 2009) about schools in the U.S., as well as have access to and understand the curriculum and instructional resources used in the schools (Adair, 2016; Ladky & Peterson, 2008; Max-Antony, 2018a). Once fully equipped with this knowledge, international parents can support their children and have a better understanding of the goals and philosophy of their children's teacher. In the same vein, although personnel at mainstream schools are also willing to reach all learners, they are often limited in their understanding of international students' and parents' perspectives on education (Tobin, 2016).

Summary

Tobin (2016) posits that researchers, administrators, and teachers of early childhood education and care centers do not currently know how to best serve young international (immigrant) children and their families. In particular, he states,

> As our preschools struggle to develop a coherent approach to serving immigrant children and their families, three-and four-year old children are left with the task of being border crossers, who move back and forth each day between the often-discordant cultural worlds of home and school. Immigrant parents must figure out on their own what is expected of them, what role, if any they can play in their child's preschool, and how they might voice their wishes and concerns. (Tobin et al., 2016, p. 10)

This should be a primary concern for researchers, teachers, and teacher educators due to rapid demographic shifts in the United States. Understanding how the traditional framework of parental involvement based on the norms and rituals of White middle-class families in the U.S. does not match with the experiences and cultural background of international families from the current research has provided an insight to the urgency of transforming the field and developing the next generation of inclusive parental involvement framework that corresponds to the needs of all families and their young children who are the cornerstone of this debate.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methods used in this study, including purpose of the study, followed by the research questions. The qualitative multi-case study design is explained, and the participants and the research site are described. Following, there is a discussion of how and when the data collection for this study was conducted. A detailed description of the data analysis procedures is also included. Finally, issues of validity, trustworthiness, and ethics are addressed.

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this qualitative multi-case study is to better understand international relocatee parents' (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021) perspectives on parental involvement practices utilized to support early learning and development of their young children. The expectation is that such understanding of international relocatee parents' perspectives about parent involvement practices might assist early childhood educators in addressing this complex area of home, school, and community involvement of international relocatee parents in the early learning and development of their young children in the U.S. context. Using a demographic questionnaire, researcher's journal, one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured and focus group interviews, this study examined international relocatee parents' perspectives on parental involvement practices in their young children's early learning and development.

Research Questions

- In what ways are international relocatee parents involved in their young children's early learning and development?

- What are the parental involvement practices identified by the international relocatee parents and why do they deem these important to the early learning and development of their young children?
- What are the cross-cultural similarities and differences amongst international relocatee parents in regard to parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs?

Research Methodology and Design

To better understand international relocatee parents' perspectives on parental involvement practices in their young children's early learning and development, I conducted a multiple case qualitative research study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). According to Merriam (2009), "multi-case" means that the researcher explores multiple cases within a bounded system. Qualitative case study is exploratory research that examines processes rather than outcomes (Merriam, 1998), and is used to gain an understanding of a particular situation and the meaning of this situation for the participants. The main difference of multi-case studies from other types of qualitative research is that they are exploratory descriptions of a bounded system (Smith, 1978). According to Merriam (2009), the case is an entity that is defined by its boundaries, which determines what will and will not be studied. The same is asserted by Creswell (2013): case studies are "an exploration of a 'bounded system' of a case or multiple case over time through detail, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information rich in context" (p. 97).

Moreover, case study approaches to research are appropriate when the researcher "seeks to answer how or why questions" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 28). The purpose of this study is to understand *how* parents are involved in the early learning and development of their young child. Additionally, I aim to explore *why* parents choose particular parental

involvement (PI) practices to support the early learning and development of their young children and how these PI practices are similar or different amongst various international relocatee parents.

International relocatee parents were the target participants in this multi-case study. The multi-case study design allowed the researcher to closely observe, study, and learn from these parents with an aim of making inferences and develop a deep knowledge about international parents and their involvement in the early education and development of their young child in the U.S. context. As stated by Creswell (2014),

> [T]he intent (of using qualitative research methods) is not to generalize to a population, but to develop an in-depth exploration of a central phenomenon. Thus, to best understand this phenomenon, the qualitative researcher purposefully or intentionally selects individuals and sites. (p. 154).

Data was gathered using one-on-one, open-ended, semi-structured interview and a focus group interview protocol as well as a demographic questionnaire and the researcher journal. The design allowed families to answer questions without being constrained by the formality involved in answering questions in a structured interview. A multi-case study approach is considered appropriate for this study because it provides the opportunity for the researcher to "develop[ed] an in-depth analysis of a case," such as "a program, event, activity, [or] process" (Creswell, 2014, p. 14). A case study provides the researcher with an opportunity to investigate, but not necessarily, solve the problem (Creswell 2012, 2014).

In addition, the use of case study in this research is a response to the call for more qualitative research in understanding the experiences of international parents in regard to their involvement practices in the development and early education of their young children. Because

of its promising contribution to the field to increase the empirical and theoretical base of information with which to address important issues, case study methods allowed the researcher to "retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events"- such as demographic changes and individual life cycles that are at the core of this study.

Research Context and Participants

I conducted my study at a midwestern public university's Early Education Center, otherwise known as a university laboratory school in the United States. The school was launched in 1972. Since then it has played a central role in the education and care of young children in the university community. With a long tradition of professional and pedagogical excellence, the school provides innovative early education programs for toddlers (18 months), preschoolers (3-4 years old), and kindergarteners (5-6 years old). At the same time, the school serves as a professional development and research center. The curriculum of the school is play-based and inquiry oriented. It is inspired by Regio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 1980) and informed by an International Baccalaureate Primary Years framework (ibo.org, 2019).

The university is home to a large population of international students, exchange visiting guests (exchange students, scholars, professors) and faculty members. As of 2018, the total number of international students equaled 1,662 (Total international enrollment, 2019), but the total number of international faculty and visiting guests was unfortunately not available. Many of the international students or visiting guests bring their families and children, and consequently, the laboratory school is their first choice to place their young children due to its proximity to campus. While the school's criteria for admissions is designed to ensure a diverse group of children, the priority is given to the families of university staff, students and faculty. Therefore, more than 26% (EEC, 2020) of the school's student population is comprised of international

families holding various immigration statuses.

The lab school, i.e., the Early Education Center (EEC) where the study took place, became an International Baccalaureate (IB) World School in 2018, adopting the Primary Years Program (PYP) into its Reggio Emilia (Malaguzzi, 1980) inspired curriculum. The center's philosophy is grounded in social constructivism, following the belief that knowledge is constructed through an active process of inquiry that prioritizes exploration, communication, meaningful relationships, and play.

Research Participants

The research participants (RP) are parents of international children, who are visiting the university in the midwestern United States either for a short term with a non-immigrant visa or long term i.e., immigrated permanently to the U.S. They are either working, studying, and/or affiliated with the university community. Priority for selection of research participants is given to the international relocatee parents whose children age three to five, mainly referred to as preschoolers, are enrolled at the Early Education Center (EEC). I chose to study this particular age range because this is the time where rapid brain development is taking place and the interactions of children with their families and those around them would help them shape their personality and their own ways of thinking and reasoning (Bakken, Brown, & Downing, 2017). In addition, this time is a precursor for kindergarten and formal schooling and the success of children from international families is crucial to their future success in school.

The participants were purposefully (Coyne, 1997) recruited, based on the criteria, with the assistance of the school's coordinator and secretary, to participate in an in-depth, semi–structured, face-to-face interview and subsequent focus group discussions. The interview was based on 18 questions that took about 60 to 90 minutes to conduct. Focus group questions were

derived from the interview analysis. During the in-depth, face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions, the perceptions of families were examined in order to gain in-depth perspectives regarding their involvement practices in their young child's early learning and development (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Yin, 2016). In addition, the qualitative purposeful sampling helped to select participants who could best give insights into the phenomenon, to develop a detailed understanding and might give voice to silenced people (Berg & Lune, 2004; Coyne, 1997) who are international parents.

Study Participants

I used the purposive sampling (Maxwell, 2013) to select my study participants from the pool of more than 26 international relocatee parents (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021) whose children attended the Early Education Center during the time of the data collection, i.e., Fall 2019. Although the invitation to take part in the study was sent via email to all parents who identified as international, only 13 out of 26 international parents, three male and ten female, indicated they would be willing to participate in the study. The main selection criteria limited participation to those parents who were born outside of the U.S., arrived in the country through various ways, and held different immigration statuses and educational credentials. Understanding and speaking the English language was not part of the selection criteria. Therefore, those without English language skills could take part in the study and would be provided with translators if needed. However, all 13 study participants had a high command of English and did not require a translator during the interviews.

In addition, 12 study participants hold bachelor's and master's degrees from their home countries. One participant completed his Ph.D. and worked in the U.S., and nine participants were in the process of completing their doctoral studies. While two participants were new to the

country, nine participants, despite living in the country for many years, were new to the school system, as their first child was enrolled in a U.S. preschool. Among all the participants, two members, who had worked in the U.S. public school system for many years, were able to share the most insights into schooling in the U.S.

The table below represents the participants' profiles. I used pseudonyms to give anonymity, provide confidentiality and to protect the identity of my participants.

Table 1

Participants Profiles

Name (pseudonyms) & Age	Country of origin	Home Languages	Highest level of education	Length of time in the U.S.	Children
Zhang Wei (father, 36)	China	Mandarin Chinese, Cantonese, & English	Ph. D	13 years	1
Li Na (mother, 31)	China	Mandarin Chinese & English	Ph. D	1 year	1
Li Jing (mother, 33)	China	Mandarin Chinese & English	Ph. D	4.5 years	1
Wang Jing (mother, 31)	China	Mandarin Chinese & English	M.S	8 years	2
Li Min (mother, 42)	China	Mandarin Chinese & English	M.S	1 year	1
Wang Li (mother, 32)	China	Mandarin Chinese & English	Ph. D	3 years	1
Liu Yang (mother, 32)	China	Mandarin Chinese & English	Ph. D	7 years	2
Haifa (mother, 34)	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & English	Ph. D	4 years	3

Mustafa (father, 31)	Saudi Arabia	Arabic & English	Ph. D	9 years	**1**
Amir (father, 36)	Pakistan	Urdu & English	Ph. D	5 years	**1**
Lakshmi (mother, 29)	India	Telugu (South Indian) & English	Ph. D	3 years	**2**
Nora (mother, 28)	Albania	Albanian & English	Ph. D	4 years	**1**
Maria (mother, 34)	Mexico	Spanish & English	Ed.S	20 + years	**3**

*Note: The names of the participants are replaced with pseudonyms to protect their identity. Also, the years present in the United States were calculated at the time of the initial interview from September 2019 through February 2020.

Materials/Instruments

Demographic questionnaire, researcher's journal, semi-structured, face-to-face and focus group interviews were adopted as data collection tools or instruments for this study. An interview is a tool, which has been utilized for generating discussion regarding research questions (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Fifteen interview questions (see Appendix C) were used to conduct the study related to themes found in the literature on international relocatee parental involvement in their children's early education. The respondents answered interview questions which covered several topics, such as practices used to support the early learning at home, school and community; factors that influence parental involvement in their child's education; the constraints hampering parental participation in school; communication that parents have with the teacher; and parent perception of parental involvement.

Demographic Questionnaire

Prior to participating in the face-to-face interview, all selected parents completed a demographic questionnaire (see appendix B) as a means of collecting biographic, historical, and educational information relevant to the research questions.

The questionnaire was e-mailed to the participants and completed prior to the interview. The questionnaire itself as a source of data is useful for obtaining biographic information about the parents, including employment status, educational background, language skills, time spent in the U.S., and the reason to take part in this research. The questionnaire helped the researcher gain important information without having to ask the parents a number of short-answer questions in an interview. The parents had a choice to complete the questionnaire electronically or on paper as they desired.

Semi-structured Interviews

The semi-structured, face-to-face, open ended interview (see appendix C), lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes and provided in-depth information from each of the participants (Hatch, 2002; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This method of interview is deemed useful for this study because although the interviewer asked the main questions, he/she followed the respondents' (participants') leads (Hatch, 2002), therefore facilitating a more conversational approach with the respondent (Merriam, 2009) which led to a more meaningful and free expression of ideas.

In this study, the open-ended aspect of the semi-structured interview allowed participants to provide in-depth insight about their perceptions of the involvement practices in the early education and development of their young children. The interviews also allowed the participants to describe not only what practices they used but why and how this particular practice contributed to the early learning and development of their young child in the U.S. context.

Focus Group Interview

A focus group is defined as a small gathering of individuals who have a common interest or characteristic, facilitated by a moderator, who uses the group and its interactions as a way to gain information about a particular issue (Lewis, 1995; Gibbs, 1997; Marczak & Sewell, 1998). The main purpose of focus groups is to promote a comfortable atmosphere of disclosure in which people can share their ideas, experiences, and attitudes about a topic. Participants "influence and are influenced," while researchers play various roles, including that of moderator, listener, observer, and eventually inductive analyst (Krueger & Casey, 2000). A number of key characteristics led to the increased use of focus groups in the last twenty years. Generally, as is the case for most qualitative methods, it is the focus group's ability to access the "knowledge, ideas, story-telling, self-presentation, and linguistic exchanges within a given cultural context" (Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998, p. 5). The qualitative methods such as focus groups, participant observation, case studies, and individual interviews pay more attention to the original voices of actors in their everyday lives, allowing researchers the possibility of observing and presenting a broader view of social reality within their research practices (Lewis, 1995; Gibbs, 1997). Stated simply, focus groups helped to capture those experiences that cannot be "meaningfully expressed by numbers " (Berg, 1995, p. 3).

The primary rationale for using focus group interviews (see appendix D) for this particular study was three-fold: (a) understanding how parents are involved in the early education and development of their young children in the U.S. context and to document the range of family involvement practices parents offer, (b) uncovering factors that hinder parental involvement at home and at school, and (c) providing parents a space where they can freely express their wishes and concerns and learn what socio-cultural similarities and differences exist

amongst international relocatee parents in relation to their parental involvement practices. Each of these reasons corresponded with using focus group interviews for data collection. As stated by Krueger and Casey (2000), by bringing together multiple individuals at one time, more varied data was gathered.

After all the participants took part in one-on-one interviews, two different focus groups met once. However, not every participant could join a focus group because of lack of time, family difficulties, health issues, or other factors. As a result, the two focus group interviews included only five parents. The focus group interview protocol (Appendix C) was developed in relation to the themes that emerged from the first individual interviews (Appendix B). In other words, the questions during the initial interview that evoked more concerns and called attention to misunderstandings were discussed by the group in order to get deeper insights on the topic.

The focus group interview was crucial for this study as it helped in "bringing to the surface aspects of a situation which might not otherwise be exposed" (Punch, 2005, p. 171). Moreover, this interviewing style allows the creation of group dynamics that can generate new thinking for some participants (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 1983; Punch, 2005). The goal was to stimulate participants to make their perceptions about their parental involvement practices used to support the early learning and development of their young children explicit.

Both focus groups interviews prompted each person to share her/his responses on each question. Parents representing different countries listened and commented on each other's responses, added to each other's conversations, agreed and disagreed on various statements, and overall were able to build on what the previous participant has shared.

Since focus groups are unique in their explicit use of group interaction to produce data

(Barbour & Kitzinger, 1998), the research participants had an opportunity to elaborate more in depth on the questions or concerns they raised during the interview. As a method, focus groups are based on two fundamental assumptions. The first is that individuals can provide a rich source of information about a topic. The second is that the collective and individual responses encouraged by the focus group setting generated material that was different from other methods (Glitz, 1998; Morgan, 1997).

Researcher's Journal

As a multilingual and bicultural researcher, I was aware that my background as an international parent needs to be regularly checked to ensure that it will not negatively affect the outcomes of the research. Engaging in a process of systematic, critical self-reflection through the use of a journal served as a way to monitor and control my biases. I used my research journal after every interview and focus group discussions to write down any thoughts or opinions regarding the experiences I had. As such, cross-checking my research journal on a regular basis ensured that my subjective interpretations did not become part of the analysis of the data.

Data Collection

The University Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval, as well as the IRB approval from the Early Education Center were obtained before the start of the data collection. Upon approval from the IRB and gaining permission from the school, the recruitment e-mail (see Appendix A) was sent to all international relocatee parents whose children are enrolled in the preschool classes at the lab school. Once the reply to take part in the interview was received from thirteen families**,** the interview was scheduled in a mutually agreed upon location. The consent form was thoroughly explained to the parent and signed prior to the interview. The demographic questionnaire was completed prior the interview as well. Ten interview participants (five in each

group) took part in the subsequent focus group discussions.

Data Analysis

As stated by Maxwell (2013), "data analysis may be the most mysterious aspect of qualitative research" (p. 105). In a broad sense, data analysis is necessary in order to make sense of the data (Schwandt, 2007). Data analysis provides a means by which the artifacts, conversations, and/or observations inform the research questions and study purposes.

In a multi-case study such as the one being proposed here, there are two levels of analysis – the within-case analysis and the cross-case analysis (Merriam, 2009). The within-case analysis treats each case (in this study, each international parent) as its own entity. That is, the data for each case is analyzed on its own without reference to other cases in the study. Once all the cases had been examined individually, the researcher engages in cross-case comparisons, which involved comparing and contrasting the data sets for each case. The use of multiple cases helped reveal similarities and differences across cases.

Data analysis began with the transcription of the digital interviews and focus group discussions audio. The data sources are read multiple times and coded using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Though originally designed for grounded theory research, this method is now widely accepted for conducting data analysis in other qualitative approaches such as case studies (Merriam, 2009). A codebook with a definition of each code and an example quotation was created during the coding process. These codes were combined and collapsed in order to determine the themes within the data set. This method allowed for a systematic analysis of the data.

According to Schwandt (2007), "coding is a process that disaggregates the data, breaks it down into manageable segments, and identifies or names those segments" (p. 32). This process

involved continuous comparing and contrasting of the successive segments of data (Schwandt, 2007). The comparing data segments collected for this study helped the researcher in recognizing recurring themes within the data set. Coded segments of the data were organized into categories that were defined in the codebook. Merriam (2009) provides a simple illustration of what it means to organize codes into categories and the purpose of this analytic process:

> [C]onsider the task of sorting two hundred food items found in a grocery store. These two hundred items in a research study would be bits of information or units of data upon which to base an analysis. By comparing one item with another, the two hundred items could be classified into any number of categories. Starting with a box of cereal, for example, you could ask whether the next item, an orange, is like the first. Obviously not. There are now two piles [i.e. categories] into which the next item may or may not be placed…[Most] likely, you would divide the items into common grocery store categories: meats, dairy, produce, canned goods, and so on. These categories would be fairly comprehensive classes, each of which could be further subdivided (p. 177).

This is the process that was accomplished in the analysis of the data sources in this study. Segments pulled from each source were categorized and organized into categories. The naming of the categories came from the researcher's understanding of the data, the participants' wording of particular concepts, previous research literature, or a combination of these three sources (Merriam, 2009). Most importantly, categories need to be "responsive to the purpose of the research" (Merriam, 2009, p. 185). This process of analytic induction revealed themes and recurring patterns of meaning in the data set. These patterns led the researcher to make justifiable, empirically based conclusions about the parental involvement practices of

international families in the early learning and development of their young children who attend preschool in the U.S.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

This study was designed to meet standards of credibility, dependability, and transferability in order to obtain trustworthy findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Establishing Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is the term that most accurately describes the quality in naturalistic interpretive research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Yet there are other researchers like Creswell (2003), Maxwell (2013), Merriam (2002), who prefer to use terms like 'verification,' 'validity,' and 'reliability.' In this study, several strategies were implemented in order to achieve the indicators of rigor and quality.

Credibility and Dependability

The credibility of the findings was supported firstly by triangulation of data sources. As previously described, data collected for this study included a demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussion. Triangulation of sources involved comparing different methods of data collection to see if the various sources support the same conclusion(s) (Fielding & Fielding, 1986). By comparing the data collected from each data source, i.e., demographic questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions, the risk of presenting the findings based only on one type of collection was reduced. Additionally, the inclusion of international parents who represented multiple ethnic groups served as a method of triangulation by providing multiple perspectives and potentially contrasting findings. The use of multiple data sources and methods helped to strengthen the believability of the data and subsequent findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Thus, the triangulation of multiple methods of data

collection and the use of different sources of information inform the credibility of the materials that will be analyzed.

The second method to support the credibility of the findings was member checking. Participants had an opportunity to read the findings section of the study once it was completed. This served as an opportunity to confirm or reject the findings reported in the dissertation. In this way, the participants played an active role in ensuring the trustworthiness of the data. Since this study involves multiple cases, opportunities for negative case analysis are also likely. Negative case analyses in which elements of the data do not support the emerging patterns in the data analysis may appear within or across cases.

Credibility also was established through peer debriefing. Lincoln and Guba (1985) call this a "process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer" (p. 308). This peer is a doctoral student who recently graduated from Kent State. Since this peer was pursuing her doctorate in Curriculum and Instruction, she was familiar with appropriate methods of data collection and could assist in the analysis of the data. My peer de-briefer brought attention to areas of data collection, analysis, and reporting that lacked clarity or transparency.

Dependability for this study was achieved through careful documentation, data analysis, and protection of the data sources. Data sources were stored on the researcher's computer and were password protected. Strategies for ensuring the dependability of the findings included informal data collection procedures such as ongoing review of the data and documenting initial impressions and thoughts in research memos (Maxwell, 2013). Analytic memos were written immediately in my research journal following an interview or focus group discussion, or shortly thereafter (the same day). This strategy ensured consistent written documentation of the data and served to help me document my initial impressions of the data.

The memos from my research journal aid in recording my thinking about the data and are a crucial part of identifying themes and eventually reaching conclusions about the data. Writing analytic memos helped me by providing reflexivity to the research process and organizing my thinking explicitly. The regular memos become analytic when they are interpreted through the researcher lens and wider theory, thereby creating an important extra level of narrative from the data.

Transferability

When it comes to transferability of data, case studies can be useful sources of information especially if cases share similar contexts and circumstances. Although the findings of this study cannot be generalized to include the experiences of all international families whose children attend preschool in the U.S., I hope that "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of the participants' beliefs and perceptions in relation to parental involvement and child rearing enabled the possibility of transferability of results to similar contexts. It is not the researcher's position to decide whether or not the results of this particular study are transferable to other contexts, but rather, the responsibility of the person in an "alternative" or "similar" contextual situation to decide whether or not the results of this particular study are applicable to his/her situation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In using thick description, the reader can decide to transfer the findings to similar settings or contexts (Merriam, 2009).

Ethical Consideration

Participants were properly and fully informed about the study: its purpose, significance, procedures, risks, and discomforts. Their names were replaced with pseudonyms that do not contain identifying information about the participants. All other information was kept confidential within the limits of the law in which case as prescribed by the Institutional Review

Board (IRB). Because informed consent provided the participants with the ability to "choose what shall or what shall not happen to them" (Schram, 2006, p. 142), participants signed consent forms and were given ample time to read the material and clarify any questions before deciding to participate in the study.

Limitations

Limitations pose a threat to the validity of the study if they are not addressed. One of the limitations of this study is that the work was limited to one specific school site with one specific population. This could address the issue that perspectives and themes revealed in the study only apply to this school.

The second limitation is the small sample size. However, as was previously discussed, the purpose of this research is not to generalize to larger populations but rather to present a detailed and descriptive report of the cases involved.

The third limitation is that the researcher's own assumptions and biases could limit the study by affecting the coding process. Case studies can be limited by the researcher's sensitivity and integrity (Merriam, 2016). The introduction of subjectivity and bias could affect the coding and reporting process, but I have tried to minimize this by working with a disinterested peer and keeping a reflection journal.

The fourth limitation was that both parents did not take part in the interview. Even though having both parents share their experiences on their involvement with their children's early learning and development would have enriched the data, only one parent from each family chose to take part in the interviews. Therefore, three fathers and ten mothers took part in the study, which may have led to missed opportunities to discuss cultural and gender nuances between parents.

Finally, some families might not have prior experiences with parental involvement and child-rearing in their home country if their child was born in the U.S. Therefore, their perspectives were limited to the practices they use in the U.S.

Delimitations

The unique nature of international parental involvement practices and the lack of research on how to help the young children of international families succeed in U.S. schools through parental involvement justifies the use of a case study design and purposive sampling for selecting study participants. Since this study was conducted with parents whose preschool age children currently attend preschool in the U.S, their reports of parental involvement practices were examined retrospectively.

Although this study is limited to one school and a sample of parents, it sets a foundation for better understanding of international parent involvement from the parent's point of view. This work represents how the specific school and researcher understand the international parent perspective and how to work to better involve international families in student learning. The narratives are specific to the population of the school which provides a rich representation of international parent involvement.

Role of the Researcher

Knowledge is constructed through lived experiences. As one moves through life's various stages and events, one adopts multiple identities which serve to help a person make sense of their world. I am a Muslim, born and raised in Tajikistan, Central Asia. I am also a wife, a mother of a teenage girl, a professional in the field of early childhood education, and a researcher. The combination of these identities with the cultural norms which makes all these identities meaningful to me certainly impacts my role as a researcher.

I have lived in the United States for the last six years, first as an international student and recently with a change of status to Permanent Resident of the U.S. The change in my immigration status from an international student to a legal permanent resident was obtained through my husband winning the diversity lottery. As a green card holder, I'm authorized to work which leads to a sense of security and peace of mind. My family stay in the U.S is legal and we are no longer bound to strict immigration rules.

My profound interest in working with an international (immigrant) population comes from my own sense of belonging to the international community. More pointedly, my status as an international student considered a short-term immigrant, who came to the U.S. with my husband and young child, further fueled my enthusiasm for working with a population that in many ways mirrored my own story.

Yet, as a researcher, I know that there are distinct differences between and within groups. From a sociocultural perspective, we know that although international relocatee parents share many characteristics, the unique and specific socio-historical and socio-cultural experiences may result in vast differences between the particular sub-groups. In contrast to the international relocatee parents who arrive confident in their status as U.S. citizens, other new arrivals, who hold Permanent Resident or Green Card status, or are international or exchange students, asylum seekers, refugees or illegal immigrants, definitely cannot make the same claim.

Nevertheless, there are recurring themes in the stories and lived experiences of all international relocatee parents. As an international researcher, I am trying to learn from the real-life stories of international relocatee parents and specifically those accounts of their involvement in the early learning and development of their young children in the U.S. context. This is a way to expand the collective knowledge and practice within the field of early childhood education.

It is important to realize that culture mediates how a researcher thinks, asks questions, collects and interprets data, and reports findings (Kvale & Brinkman, 2009; Arzubiaga et al., 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Hurtado, 1996; Rogoff, 2003). In my role as a researcher, the ideal is not to move away from my cultural self but use it as a way to strengthen the research. If the experiences, agendas, and values that I bring as a researcher assist in the production of knowledge and if the focus of my research is international relocatee parents, specifically international parents whose young children attend the U.S. preschools, then my own experiences as an international relocatee parent are also relevant.

As stated by Hurtado (1996), "the endpoint of immigrant children's adaptation to the United States is not a total rejection of their ethnic origins and complete assimilation to the Anglo mainstream; rather the endpoint is stable biculturalism" (p. 47). It is exactly this biculturalism living half of my life in the Eastern traditional culture and another six years in the liberal Western culture that serves as the central point for the duality of my "insider/outsider" role as a researcher. I am both an insider as an interpreter of international relocatee parents' experiences because of my membership within an international parent group. I am also an outsider because of my higher educational background and living in the U.S. for the last six years and raising my child in the U.S. school context.

Yet, I am aware of my research biases. As Arzubiaga et al. (2008) warned, "researchers can inadvertently essentialize cultural groups when they assume that all members of a community act and think the same way, when in reality, 'pure' or homogenous cultures do not exist" (p. 4).

As a researcher, I have to recognize the potential of over-identifying with my participants as an international relocatee parent, while considering that my very Eastern background in early

childhood could cause me to be judgmental of my participants' ways of engaging with their young children. The awareness of myself as a bicultural insider (born and raised in Tajikistan) and outsider (receiving my M.Ed. and Ph.D. in the U.S.) will remain at the core of my role as a researcher and contributes the integrity and quality of this research. Moreover, the consistent use of a "researcher" journal served to alleviate the biases and was a constant reminder of my "insider/outsider" role as a researcher.

Summary

This study employed a qualitative, multi-case research approach to explore the perceptions of international relocatee parents' involvement practices in their children's early learning and development. The problem is that there is a little practical information for preschools to implement high-quality family involvement programs that include all families.

Creswell (2013) and Merriam (2016) asserted that as a method of research, qualitative research is excellent for unearthing a new understanding of complicated issues or objects. Therefore, the qualitative research approach was used to expand on an individual's experience or reinforce existing knowledge gained through previous studies. The advantage of conducting case studies is that researchers may highlight the details of contextual analyses based on a relatively limited number of events or conditions and their interrelatedness.

With the help of face-to-face, open-ended, semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions the perspectives of the participants regarding family involvement practices were examined. The study participants included thirteen international families representing countries such as China, India, Pakistan, Mexico, Saudi Arabia and Albania. Data from 13 interviews and two focus group discussions were coded using constant-comparative method. The multi-case study will help early childhood programs understand the perspectives of the international

families in regard to their involvement practices and provide information to be used in the development of their family involvement programs.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

According to the multiple perspectives revealed in the data of this study, parental involvement practices used to support the early learning and development of a child have several characteristics. First, they require a belief in doing what is best for the child at an early age. Second, they entail the knowledge parents possess on the experiences that are developmentally appropriate and help the child to grow physically, social-emotionally and cognitively. Lastly, it is the lived experiences plus cultural and educational background (Moll et al, 1992; Rogoff, 2003) that shapes parents' vision on the choice of practices they use to promote holistic development of their children.

This chapter begins with a review of research questions, purpose and the phases of data collection and analysis of the study. Next, I present the main findings from 13 face-to-face, semi-structured, in-depth individual interviews and two focus group interviews. The second section contains the results of the cross-case analysis in which differences and similarities among the international relocatee (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021) parents' perspectives on child-rearing beliefs and parental involvement practices are discussed. This chapter concludes with a summary of the core categories that also serves as a brief introduction to the themes to be discussed in Chapter V.

Overview of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative multi-case study is to understand international relocatee parents' perspectives on their parental involvement practices used to support the early

learning and development of their young children. I explored how international relocatee parents define their involvement practices and why they view these involvement practices as important to the development and early education of their young children. Furthermore, I examined the cross-cultural similarities and differences amongst the international relocatee parents in relation to their parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs. The study addressed the following research questions:

- In what ways are international relocatee parents involved in their young children's early learning and development?
- What are the parental involvement practices identified by the international relocatee parents and why do they deem these important to the early learning and development of their young children?
- What are the cross-cultural similarities and differences amongst international relocatee parents in regard to parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs?

Thirteen international relocatee parents representing different countries, such as China, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Albania, were interviewed individually and took part in two subsequent focus group interviews. Consequently, the individual open-ended, semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, the demographic questionnaire, and the researcher journal served as means of data collection for the study. Typed transcripts of individual and focus group interviews were analyzed using constant comparative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002) to identify patterns, categories, and themes. Each participant was viewed as a single case in the study. After each case was analyzed separately as a

unit, a parallel cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) was conducted to identify differences and commonalities amongst the study participants perceptions.

The data analysis also was drawn on a theoretical framework that merges aspects of Rogoff's socio-cultural historical lens (1998, 2003) with a funds of knowledge approach (Moll et al., 1992) that both represent the socio-cultural historic perspective. Rogoff's work was used as a lens to analyze the cultural processes that are an inevitable part of a human development. A funds of knowledge approach helped to make visible the resources, skills, and expectations that international relocatee parents possess. Taken together, these theories helped to further strengthen the core aspect of the study. That is to learn and understand the cultural frameworks (Moll et al., 1992) and or cultural regularities (Rogoff, 2003) that direct the choices international relocatee parents make in their everyday parental involvement practices to support the early learning and development of their young children in their host country. The section below describes the main findings of the study in details.

Study Findings

The analysis of individual and focus group interview findings demonstrated that participants' perspectives of parental involvement practices utilized to support the early learning and development of their young children are shaped by a combination of three main factors: cultural background, educational background, and lived experiences gained as a result of living in their home and host countries. Consequently, those parents who were new to the country based their perspective on their earlier lived experiences in their home country, including educational and cultural experiences. However, those with even a brief introduction to life in the U. S. and the American educational experience shared how their views had changed and evolved.

As a result of the data analysis four overarching themes emerged from the interview data. These themes include:

1. Parental involvement practices used at home, school, and community
2. Parents seeking ways to be involved in their children's school
3. Parents' initial dissatisfaction with the inquiry-oriented, play-based curriculum
4. Parents' desire to raise their children speaking their home language and English language as well as adhere to home and the U.S. cultural norms

In the following sections, I provide further explication on each of these themes.

Parental Involvement at Home, School, and Community

For several decades, research in student success has shown parental involvement in the education of their young children as one of the main factors that affects cognitive and behavioral outcomes of children across socio-economic sectors and ethnic groups (Bierman, 2017; Nunez et al., 2015; Wilder, 2014; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). However, given the breadth of the parental involvement construct, there is no consistent or single definition or term to describe parental involvement (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2012; Shen et al., 2014; Yoder & Lopez, 2013). Therefore, when asking the research participants about their parental involvement practices, most of them did not clearly understand the question due to the lack of consistent definition of parental involvement. Thus, for the purpose of this study, I defined parental involvement as "all the parent/adult-led activities aimed to support the early learning and development of a young child at home, in school, and in the community." In other words, it is the presence of parents in their children's learning, either in a formal school space or in more personal, informal spaces, including spaces created by parents themselves (Pérez-Carreón, Drake & Calabrese, 2005). Considering that, the findings to the first two research questions— in what ways are international

parents involved in their young children's early learning and development, and why are these practices viewed as important to early learning and the development of their young children—are presented below.

Parental Involvement Practices Used at Home

Every parent has hopes, dreams, and expectations for their child which are based on parents' values and beliefs (Peterson et all., 2014). In particular, many international parents immigrate to pursue better educational and life opportunities for themselves and their children (Suarez-Orozco, Abo-Zena, & Marks, 2015; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). Despite all the hardships the majority of international parents face during their transition into a new society, they hold high educational expectations for their children (Crul et al., 2012; Lee & Zhou, 2015), and assist their children in every way possible to achieve that goal. According to Jaynes (2012), parental expectations are the most effective component of parental involvement in boosting the academic achievement of children. Therefore, as known from previous studies (Anthony-Newman, 2020; Poza, Brooks, & Valdes, 2014; Isic-Ercan, 2018; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021) one of the ways international parents support this endeavor is that international parents are fully engaged in parenting and helping their children's learning and development at home.

The same was true in this study. In the majority of responses, parents viewed their role as mainly at home and their home involvement practices were described not only as caring for the physical well-being but developing the socio-emotional and cognitive skills of their young children. Practices like eating and preparing food together, playing and talking, going for a walk, instilling good morals, language and cultural norms, reading, writing, math, drawing and coloring pictures, and watching cartoons both in their home language and English language are amongst the everyday activities international parents carry on at home.

As stated by all thirteen participants, despite their busy life and being overwhelmed in the evening either due to school or a busy work schedule, parents still feel an obligation to spend time with their young children and make sure the children get the additional educational and moral support at home. For example, Wang Li, the mother of three-year-old Alice from China, shared that despite her busy schedule she makes sure that she is doing "what she is supposed to do" with her child at home. Wang Li said:

> Well, I pick Alice up at school and when we get home, we have dinner, play different games together, sometimes we cook together and go outside for a walk. I sing a lot of Chinese songs to her and we read a lot in Chinese and English. Even though I am exhausted after classes, I make sure that I do what [I am] supposed to do with Alice at home. (Wang Li Individual Interview, November 5, 2019)

By stating "what I am supposed to do," this parent meant spending informal time playing, cooking, walking outside, singing, reading, etc.. overall taking care of her child's cognitive, socio-emotional and physical well-being. This quote represents the type of parental involvement in the early education and development happening at home that is prevalent among international relocatee parents who mainly see their role at home (Antony-Newman, 2020; Li 2012; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021).

Home Activities

All parents mentioned that they do various activities with their children at home. Such involvement varies from reading, math, various art activities, cooking together, playing inside or outside the house, learning numbers and letters, and the like. However, all the activities that parents thought would contribute to the early learning and development of their young children were mainly chosen based on the educational background of parents. As all the participants were

highly educated and skilled professionals in their field of study, they were always ready to work with their children, especially when they had time at home or during the weekends.

Most parents chose the activities that fit their own educational background and interests, and they wanted to spark that interest in their children as well. Being a math professor, Zhang Wei, father of three-year-old boy Alex from China, mentioned that learning math is crucial at this age and if the child is not interested in math from early years it will be hard for him later in life. Therefore, their home involvement practices mainly involved reading and discovering math skills. This is how Zhang Wei shared his thoughts:

> Lego is the primary education tool we are using as something specific to teach Alex about math at home. That's what I mostly do with Alex because I am math Professor. Recently, we noticed that he started to become creative in terms of developing new Lego stuff. So we bought more Lego pieces and are trying to guide him to create something he likes, and then also doing some problem solving. The Lego we are playing is older than his age requirement. So, a lot of time it's kind of tough for a three-year-old him but we are trying to challenge him and teach him how to problem solve, or how to tolerate the failure. (Zhan Wei Individual Interview, November 1, 2019)

The same was learned from another family. Liu Yang is a mother from China who, despite being a very busy doctorate student, still tried to find time with her husband to do math activities with their preschooler William. Since both parents were majoring in math, the practices they used with their child were based on learning numbers and counting. Liu Yang mentioned:

> Me and my husband are both busy doctorate students, we like reading a lot and we major in math, so we like numbers. And, yes we teach William how to count every single day. Sometimes we use chopsticks and sometimes we use other objects. And we have the little

> Lego blocks that William loves to play with. We have a lot of math toys. We can do, like, addition, subtraction, and just count, count and we count a lot. (Liu Yang Individual Interview, November 8, 2019)

As it is evident from the above quotations, these parents selected activities to support the early learning and development of their young children at home based on their own interests and educational backgrounds. Since this is what made these parents successful in life (Antony-Newman, 2020), they believe that passing on these skills to their children will also help them to be successful in life. Further, all parents in the study attested to the fact that they are the co-educators to their children and it is their responsibility for their children to be successful (Busch et al., 2018). Teaching children the knowledge and skills parents possessed, helping to improve their early literacy and language skills, and participating in their children's learning experiences and growth (Newchurch, 2017) was something all study participants highly valued as parents.

Reading to the Child. The second important practice that all participants were highly engaged in, despite their educational background, was reading to the child. Haifa, mother of a three-year-old girl named Salima from Saudi Arabia, stated the importance of reading in English at home every day as it helps her children to become fluent English readers and speakers. Since her children attend the English medium school, developing reading skills in English was important to her. Even though she did not have time to read to her children herself, she asked her older child to read to the younger one, still making certain that children have their reading time at home. She shared:

> I know reading is so important for all children. Most of the time all three of my children read together. Sometime as a Ph.D. student I am very busy, but I always ask my older son to read to my younger children, Saima and Salima, in English. I think reading in English

> is very important for them at this age as they go to English school and I need to make sure they have their reading time at home. (Haifa, Individual Interview, November 14, 2019)

Likewise, as mentioned earlier Zhang Wei, the math professor, supported math activities and his wife promoted reading in English and Mandarin Chinese languages at home. Both parents found these practices important to their child's early learning and development as it aligned with their goal to raise their child speaking both languages. Zhang Wei said:

> Actually, books are the most important one. We read to Alex, very often, my wife reads to him a lot both in English and in Chinese. We started to read to him since maybe he was a couple months old. So math and reading are the most important thing for us at home to do with Alex. We want Alex to be bilingual and that's why we read a lot in both languages at home every day. (Zhan Wei, Individual Interview, November 1, 2019)

The same was stressed by Nora from Albania, mother of three-year-old Emerson. Nora indicated that they also read a lot at home in Albanian and English languages. However, the choices for reading materials were not always Emerson's. In Nora's understanding and upbringing, it was only adults who know what is best for their child and therefore decide what activity to pursue or what book to read. However, her perspective changed after seeing her child making her own choices of books and activities in her school. Talking with her child's teacher, Nora learned that making choices helps children to grow up to be a more confident and responsible person. Therefore, Nora changed her perspective and let her child make her own decisions. She said:

> I let her choose what book she wants to read, and we read it together. I always chose the book for her myself but after she started to attend the Early Education Center, I learned

> how important it is to give her the choice of picking a book. I talked to her teacher and learned how making choices helps her grow as a confident and responsible person. Now she chooses the book she wants to read. We read a lot in English and in Albanian every day at home. (Nora Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

It is clear from the data that everyday reading practices happened at home, and that was true to all parents, including the one reported above. Raising a bilingual, bicultural child was a goal for all of my study participants. Therefore, reading in both the home language and English language was a priority. All parents believed that reading aloud improves children's cognitive development, language skills, and life skills (Alkaaby, & Mavriqi, 2021). Thus, they make sure that their young children are exposed to various reading materials in both languages. Ten out of thirteen parents reported the challenge of finding books in their home language in the U.S. They said that the only way to get them was either through their friends or shipping from their home countries, which is very expensive most of the time. In addition to this, only three parents said they would let their children to pick what books in what language they wanted to read. The other ten parents admitted that they feel children are too young at this age to know what is best for them, thus the choice of reading was always made by parents. This is in line with the parents' upbringing as well as educational and cultural background (Morales-Alexander, 2020). All 13 participants grew up and were educated in what they described as an "authoritarian" and "traditional" society. Therefore, they still wanted to have the authority and control over their children's learning choices (Antony-Newman, 2020). However, Nora's quote is a true example of a shift in perspective. Once parents inquire and understand the meaning behind specific practices happening at their child's school, they may be able to change their practices based on their new knowledge.

Encouraging Independent Play. Encouraging independent play was the third practice that all study participants placed a high value on. All parents, however, saw their children's play more as a time for rest and having fun rather than time for learning and cognitive growth. Haifa, mother of three-year-old girl Salima from Saudi Arabia, said:

> I do lots of pretend play with my children. Salima when she comes from EEC she likes to play Mrs. Leila from her class. So, we all sit and pretend while she is reading a book or teaches what she learned at school today. Sometime, when I am tired and my children are done with their homework from school, I always let them play and have fun. (Haifa, Individual Interview, November 14, 2019)

The same was emphasized by Amir, a father of four-year-old girl Nazmin from Pakistan. Even though Amir let his daughter Nazmin play different games inside and outside of the house, it was only after she completed her homework assigned by her father, like writing letters and numbers or learning the alphabet. For Amir, learning was doing specific academic activity while playing included some time for rest, fun, and entertainment. Amir said:

> "We, actually, do similar activities to what Nazmin is doing at school and that helps us stay connected with school. They play a lot at school and when she is at home, we play a lot inside and I always take her outside to play as well. We play card games often too. But we only do it after she is done doing her homework, learning her numbers and letters and practice some writing. (Amir, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019)

This evidence supports the idea that not all of the study participants viewed play as learning (Zhulamanova, 2019). Therefore, there was always a clear line between time for learning, when children sit for specific activities like learning numbers, letters, reading books, etc., and time for playing, when children have some time to be engaged in free play that did not

have any connection to learning. Only two out of thirteen participants supported the idea that play is an opportunity for children to learn and grow, while eleven parents hold a strong, traditional view of learning. This topic will be further elaborated on in the final section of the chapter.

Teaching and Learning to Read and Write. The fourth practice ten out of thirteen parents mentioned was teaching to read and write to their young preschoolers at home. In addition to doing various math games, reading books, and encouraging independent play, ten out of thirteen participants stressed the importance of teaching and learning to read and write at the preschool age. These ten parents also highly emphasized the point that the sooner the child learns to read and write, the more successful s/he will be in school (Li & Rao, 2010). Therefore, these parents highly pushed their children to memorize and practice writing letters and numbers in order to help the child get ready to enter the elementary school.

In addition, these parents expected the teaching of basic early literacy and numeracy skills to occur in their child's preschool. Parents expected their children to bring home homework in the form of the worksheets so they can do them together with their child at home. Even though some parents thought bringing schoolwork home from school helps them stay connected with school, other participants expressed that they felt there was a disconnect between what their children were learning in school and their expectations. This point was highly regarded by many parents. For example, Amir, a father of a four-year-old girl from Pakistan, mentioned: "We do a lots of ABCs and 123's worksheets at home. This is something that school is not going through but I feel it should do, but we feel it does not. Thus, we need to do it at home or she will fall behind" (Amir Individual Interview, December 2, 2019). The same concern was echoed throughout the conversations with other participants as well. Father of four-year-old

Maryam from Saudi Arabia, Mustafa, while reflecting on his own childhood education in Saudi Arabia, thought his child's early education in the U.S. is not rigorous enough. He stated: "I think Maryam needs to learn more about letters and numbers at school. I don't think they learn numbers and letters at school for now. I wish she brought some homework so we could do it at home with her" (Mustafa Individual Interview, December 9, 2019).

However, not every parent's idea of academic pressure at the preschool aligned with each other. Three out of thirteen participants highlighted the importance of providing children with rich early literacy and numeracy learning experiences along with other practices that lead to developing early literacy and numeracy skills. However, there is not an urgency to know the letters and numbers at this age as children will attend kindergarten before entering formal schooling. For example, Maria, a mother of three children ages 2, 3, and 6 from Mexico, emphasized how using different activities promotes her children's early literacy and numeracy skills without direct learning. Maria stated:

> I am trying anything at home to keep my children busy, but we really like a lot of sensory games. So we make slime together, we cook together. Sometimes it takes twice as long to get something done. And so, we will make muffins for breakfast and everybody has a job, so that's something that we really enjoy, but we also do nature walks whenever we can. On Fridays we have movie night. I like to take them to experience things. So, we go to the museum, the zoo, things like that. We also do a lot of reading, coloring, counting, and singing together at home. I think my children learn and grow from these activities as a happy individual and it also helps them build basic academic skills at this age. (Maria, Individual Interview, November 16, 2019)

Li Jing, mother of three-year-old Iris from China and who did not want to identify herself with the Chinese parents, agreed with Maria that her child's happiness at this age is more important than her academic growth. Li Jing mentioned:

> So, we are not like other Chinese parents pushing Iris for academics in her early years. I like [the] more American way, I see how my friend Laura raises her daughter who is in the same school as Iris. I want her to help me with work around house. She loves baking and we bake together; we talk a lot. I really think it's good for her at this age, rather than me pushing her to memorize a long poem, ABC or 123. I rather teach her the concept of money so she doesn't ask for a lot of stuff than memorize the numbers. If the weather is good, we just let her play in the yard. I know, maybe academically she is behind her age children in China, but I don't want her to fall behind children her age here. I see she is more independent, sociable, and asks a lot of questions. We just want her to be happy. I think it is more important for her to be happy at this age than knowing the letter and numbers. (Li Jing Individual Interview, December 2, 2019)

As the data shows, all parents made an additional effort to engage their young children in various activities to promote reading and writing. Even though most of the practices used were chosen purposefully to resemble traditional learning, some others happened simultaneously, i.e., indirectly like playing games, singing, baking. etc. While ten out of thirteen parents were highly supportive of the traditional learning practices, three parents placed a high value on teaching these skills indirectly. Despite that, all parents viewed their chosen practices as an important factor to promote early literacy and numeracy skills at home (Li & Rao, 2010). This huge emphasis on academics and the fear of falling behind are in line with previous research, which states that parents who have a higher educational level are bound to be more involved and

concerned about the academic achievement levels of their children as compared to those with low educational attainment levels (Alghazo & Alghazo, 2015). In addition, the competitive spirit is more prevalent among international parents, who constantly compare their children to their peers in their home countries. Competition is another factor that pushes these parents to put more emphasis on academics in early years.

Maintaining Home Language and Cultural Identities

Maintaining home language, cultural identities and beliefs, family values, traditions and good morals were another set of practices study participants placed a high value on raising their young children. Understanding the critical role that culture plays in shaping all the psychological processes (Kitayama, 2012), including the children's cognitive and social development, passing on the home cultural identities and home language to their young children was very crucial to all thirteen study participants. In the following sections, I provide further explanation of the related themes which emerged during the interviews.

Values and Good Morals

In addition to the practices described earlier that supported the social-emotional and cognitive development, parents also shared a lot about raising a good human being. Research participants defined a good human being as one who has values and good morals, like being respectful, obedient, empathetic, and willing to help others. Along with physical, social-emotional, and academic development of their young children, international parents were highly motivated to instill values and good morals in their children from the early years (Morales-Alexander, 2016). Specifically, parents talked about teaching their children the values that derive from their own cultural background, such as respect for each other and in particular respect for

elders, obedience, politeness, socialization and interacting with others, responsibility, hard work, helping others, empathy for others, and religious faith (Morales-Alexander, 2016).

Being a role model for their young children, interacting with them directly, showing examples of good morals, and verbal communication were the major ways in which participants enacted their values and morals. In regard to her preschooler, Haifa, a mother from Saudi Arabia, shared, "I know she is learning what I am teaching her because I observe how she interacts with her younger brother. She plays with him and treats him very well; with a lot of respect and affection" (Haifa Individual Interview, November 14, 2019).

While analyzing the participants' descriptions of their values, it must be noted that values such as respect for elders, being polite, and taking responsibility were interrelated. Participants shared that it is crucial to teach their children to be respectful towards others, and in particular, towards an elderly person. The major ways in which parents "teach" their young children about respect and other core values are by showing real life examples or being a role model. For example, Amir, a father from Pakistan, shared: "It is important for my (child) to see how I am socializing with my parents, how I respect them, and I want my child to do the same, because that's how my parents raised me and that is part of my home culture as well" (Amir Individual Interview, December 2, 2019).

As the data depicts, these parents voiced their belief that raising a good human being is highly important. This belief was acknowledged by all study participants. In addition, all thirteen parents expressed the thought that they had an obligation to transmit family values, beliefs, traditions, and good morals to their young children. Eight out of thirteen study participants supported the idea that as parents, they needed to model the best teaching strategies to teach their children good morals and values (Morales-Alexander, 2016). This is particularly important since

these children are being exposed to the new societal and cultural norms in the U.S. (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). Thus, this way of upbringing may help their children be aware and understand similarities and differences they might encounter as they grow up (Rogoff, 2003). In addition, all study participants continuously stated the critical role of home language and culture in the development of their young children in their host country. The next section will explore this theme in more detail.

Language and Culture

Language and culture are intertwined (Vygotsky, 1977). One particular language belongs to one particular group of people. Interacting with another language means interacting with the culture that speaks the language. Therefore, it is hard to understand one's culture without accessing its language directly. Language is culturally transmitted (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1977). Consequently, children learn the home language before they enter school.

All of my study participants are bilingual, fluently speaking their home languages like Mandarin Chinese, Arabic, Urdu (Pakistan), Albanian, Spanish, and Telugu (South Indian) and have a high command of English language. The question about raising a bilingual and bicultural child was hotly debated during both focus group interviews. All participants were highly in favor of raising their children bilingual and keeping the home culture alive. However, the ways to do that evoked more questions rather than answers. As it was revealed during the interviews, these children are placed in the position to learn multiple languages in order to navigate their different social and cultural environments (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). The connection between language and culture was prominent throughout the interviews. Wang Li, a mother of three-year-old Alice from China stated:

> I think language is very critical. I will try my best to teach Alice both English and Chinese as with different language she learns different habits. I realize how cultural differences is not just about the language, but also how people think, how they communicate and how they interact with each other. So, it is not only about a language. For example, I train her to say, "good morning," "good afternoon," "have a good day," "see you tomorrow," etc., teaching her to be polite. Well, in Chinese culture, we are also being polite, but we do not say as much as they do here in the U.S. like "have a good day" and "have a good night," we do not really have all those, routine things. But, if she does not say this here, she will be regarded as impolite. And she must ask for permission. Can I…? And this is not all about language, it's also how you interact with other people. So, it's called the cultural norms that comes with learning the language. (Wang Li Individual Interview, November 5, 2019)

In addition, Zhan Wei, father of three-year-old Alex, stated how maintenance of home language is important for his family to keep Alex connected to his roots back home in China. "We try to keep Chinese language at home, and I'd say about 5-10% using English. Cause he will learn English at school but at home we want him to learn Chinese. It will help him to stay connected to his roots in China" (Zhan Wei Individual Interview, November 1, 2019).

> Ni Zhen, a mother of four-year-old Aleo from China, echoed the same:
> Because Aleo is here, he has to know English. But we also hope he can keep the Mandarin Chinese as we might go back to China. Aleo is Chinese and if you are a Chinese who cannot speak Chinese that's not right. When we go back, we usually live with my parents so I hope he can keep communicating with my parents. (Ni Zhen Individual Interview, January 31, 2020)

As stated previously, some of the parents were uncertain about their future stay in the U.S., therefore, keeping the language for the sake of going back was crucial. For example, Lakshmi, a mother of four-year-old Nitesh from India, pointed to the fact that they might go back to India once they complete their studies in the U.S. and thus keeping the home language and learning English at the same time is a huge win for Nitesh. She said:

> At home we speak Telugu (South Indian language and English with Nitesh. I really hope he can learn both languages well. While we are here it is very important for him to learn English so he can understand everything, what others are saying because no one speaks Telugu here. And when we go back to India, he can speak Telugu at home. (Lakshmi Individual Interview, February 7, 2020)

All Arabic speaking parents' practices aligned with the rest of the participants as well, where they wanted their children raised bilingual and bicultural – keeping the home language and culture and adding a new language and cultural norms at the same time. However, most of them raised concerns of keeping the home language once the children become older and become more aware of their linguistic abilities. As the father of three-year-old Maryam, Mustafa mentioned:

> When Maryam just started speaking, we only used Arabic at home and she started to pick the language. But when we took her to the daycare and they spoke to her in English while we continued to speak to her in Arabic at home, it became an issue. Because when we were out, she spoke Arabic with other children and they couldn't understand her and she came back to us crying. Then we just spoke with her in English. We really want her to speak Arabic at home but don't know how we can do it with Maryam. (Mustafa Individual Interview, December 9, 2019)

A mother of three-year-old Juan, Maria emphasized the importance of keeping both languages and cultures with her three children. Maria stated:

> I speak 100 % Spanish and my husband speaks 100% English and we have done that since birth with our three children. I think that works great. I don't really expect them to answer in Spanish because I know that's more difficult for them. But I would say they understand probably 80 to 85% of what I'm saying. If I throw in a slang word, a new word, like what did you say, what does that mean? For the most part, they understand and sometimes they will answer back in Spanish or they'll mix it. (Maria Individual Interview, November 16, 2019)

Maria also pointed to the importance of raising her children bilingual and bicultural. Maria, sharing Mexican culture and Spanish language while her husband shares American English language and culture, thought of it as a special gift they can give their children. She said:

> It is absolutely important for me and my husband to raise our children bilingual and bicultural. I think education is a gift that nobody can take away from you, and your language and culture is your identity that nobody can take away from you. And so why wouldn't we do what we can as a parent to set our children off for success in all areas of their life? (Maria, Individual Interview, November 16, 2019)

As it is evident in the above quotations, these parents tried hard to keep the home language and culture alive in their homes in order to pass it on to their young children. These parents wanted their children to maintain their heritage language and culture. At the same time, they wanted their children to master English language and integrate into the U.S. culture (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). However, in doing so, parents faced challenges (Kheirkhah & Cekaite,

2015). One of the challenges parents faced was their young children rejected to speak the home language or adhere to home cultural norms.

In particular, ten out of thirteen parents expressed concern of being lonely and lost when it came to the moment that their children "reject the home language and culture" (Maria, Individual Interview, November 16, 2019). Therefore, these parents desired support from their child's preschool in extending the home culture and language from home to their children's school (Tobin et al., 2016). This theme is further elaborated on in the final section of the chapter.

Summary

In sum, international parents, despite being highly educated and skilled professionals in this study, see and value their role at home, where they set high expectations (Jaynes 2018) in regard to the educational success and overall wellbeing and cultural being of their young children. Almost all of them have high expectations for their young children, with an undergraduate degree from a university as the basic requirement when they grow up. Due to the level of education obtained by all participants in their home countries prior to immigration to the U.S and continuing their education or work while in the U.S., along with the economic, social, and cultural capital, they provide their young children with substantial support in their early learning and development at home. It is evident from previous research that parental involvement at home is an important factor for children's academic achievement (Harris & Goodall, 2007; Jeynes, 2005, 2007) and the data from this study attests to that fact, confirming that international parents are highly involved and interested in their children's early learning and development at home.

In the next section, I will present how international parents are involved at their children's schools, which is often more valued by schools and educators than home-based involvement in the United States.

International Parents' Involvement in Schools

Research consistently demonstrates that increased parental involvement yields increased student academic achievements (Ma et al., 2016; Wilder, 2014). However, it is the parents' involvement in school activities that shapes the connections, interactions, expectations, and parents' understanding of how school functions (Schneider & Arnot, 2018). It is particularly important for these newly arrived international relocatee parents, whose understanding of school involvement and school functioning differs significantly from native-born parents (Antony-Newman, 2020; Isik-Ercan, 2018), to learn how a school functions in their new host country.

Moreover, differences in child-rearing beliefs which are typical of white middle-class, native-born parents—where adults are treated as equals, teachers as a support rather than an authority figure, and children's after-school time is mainly occupied by extracurricular activities—are traditionally accepted as normative by educators in the U.S. (Lareau, 2015). However, these three concepts mentioned above are not true for international parents, who do not possess the dominant cultural background (Antony-Newman, 2020; Isik-Ercan, 2018). Subsequently, variations in child-rearing, as well as interactions with schools, make the involvement of some parents more visible or valued in comparison to others. Clear expectations and communication between parents and school has been found as the main challenge for international parents because of language barriers, cultural mismatch, and prior educational and lived experiences (Homby & Blackwell, 2018; Jafarov, 2015; Magwa & Mugari, 2017).

In this section, I will highlight four themes that emerged from the data about how international relocatee parents get involved in their children's education. These themes include communication, volunteering in classes and school events, taking part in school governance and decision making, and parental involvement practices used in the community.

Communicating

Effective communication is essential for building school-family partnerships. It constitutes the foundation for all other forms of family involvement in education. Communication between international parents and their children's teachers is a major barrier due to both linguistic and cultural factors (Magwa & Mugari, 2017; Wilder, 2014). When parents do not understand the language of instruction and schools are not able to provide translation support (Homby & Blackwell, 2018), it has a direct impact on the quality of the communication between parents and school. On the other hand, even if parents have a good command of the English language, differences in cultural norms, expectations, and teaching and learning (curriculum, instruction, etc.,) variances may also hinder effective communication between international parents and their children's schools (Jafarov, 2015; Magwa & Mugari, 2017).

It takes time for parents to speak the language of the school and meet the communicative expectations of teachers (Antony-Newman, 2020). According to Dyson (2001), communication between parents and school can be described in terms of frequency (once a week, once a month, every two months, several times a year), content (topic discussed), and method (e-mail, phone, in-person). In the context of Early Childhood, however, parent and teacher communication occurs on a day-to-day basis and almost always in person because parents interact with school personnel during drop off and pick up of their children.

Communicating In-Person

All study participants described their children's teachers at the Early Education Center as open, available, and willing to communicate or talk with parents on any topic related to their children's early learning and development. However, it was the international parents' shyness that stopped them from openly discussing their questions with the teachers. In some instances, parents reported questioning whether their question or comment was culturally and contextually correct, despite having a good command of English. For example, the mother of three-year-old Jessie, Li Min from China, stated:

> It's really hard for me to take the first step to open my mouth, to ask for, to communicate with my child's teacher. Even though I have learned English for so many years. I can ask my question, but I am not sure if this is the right question or culturally correct. Sometimes, I just have to push myself and ask. But I do think that many people, especially from Asian countries, they won't do that. It's hard, it's really hard. (Li Min, Individual Interview, November 15, 2019)

Similarly, Wang Li from China attested to the fact that having the English language skills and understanding the content is not enough when it comes to communicating with someone who shares a different cultural background, referring to the white American teachers. It is how one interacts that matters most in effectively communicating with the teachers. She said:

> For the first year. I think it would be more difficult, but since I have stayed here for three years and I have my degree in the university, I'm more capable to handle the conversation much, much better than three years ago. Because for the conversation, it's not all about the content. But also, how you would interact with the teacher, it's more important. So, because I also interact with my American classmates, I have meetings with

> my advisor, I know how to talk. But for the parents first came here, and for the parents who cannot speak English well, that's really, really difficult. If the parents do not feel confident, they cannot really talk freely and effectively with the teachers. They will listen more, instead of talking. Listen. But, if they cannot express themselves, it is not successful communication. It's just one way. (Wang Li Individual Interview, November 5, 2019)

Similarly, all other study participants who came from countries with strict boundaries between school and home, such as Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, and Mexico, admitted that the concept of open, two-way communication is novel for them. For example, Amir, a father from Pakistan, mentioned that his own parents talked to his teachers in Pakistan only if he had a problem at school or if there was a parent meeting they were required to attend. Lakshmi, recalling her school years in India, stated:

> I don't remember my mom going to school, but I remember my teacher coming home once in a month talking to my mother. In our culture, we don't question teacher's work, teacher is highly respected and viewed as an expert who knows what to do. (Lakshmi, Individual Interview, December 7, 2020)

Clearly, those international parents who gained some experience living in the new culture and dealing with their children's new school on a daily basis felt more at ease about communicating with teachers in comparison to newcomers. Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, stated:

> It was very hard at the beginning when Maryam started preschool here. But now there is no issue. I know teachers get tired, and I appreciate everything they do. I always try to ask my questions during morning or evening when I pick her up. It helps me a lot when I

> work with Maryam at home. Sometime when I have an issue, I ask teachers for suggestions and that is very helpful. (Mustafa, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Communicating with other school personnel, including the secretary, school director, and other members of the leadership team, was not an issue for the study participants. In a way, they felt there was not any need to communicate with school personnel, except for the school secretary, whom participants admired and liked. She was always available for a quick question. Thus, teachers remained at the forefront of every aspect of communication when it involved home-school communication.

On the other hand, findings revealed that the study participants did not have a clear understanding of the role of the other school personnel. Specifically, participants were not familiar with the role of the Family Services Coordinator, which they did not have in the schools in their home countries. The Family Services Coordinator has appropriate intercultural training and knowledge about second language acquisition and thus plays a vital role in building and maintaining strong relationship with families, especially the families who are new to the school. However, this service remained underutilized because participants were not aware of the Family Services Coordinator's role.

Only two out of thirteen participants had a basic understanding of this professional and had used her services. If the study participants possessed a clear understanding of this service at their child's preschool, they could have avoided a lot of misunderstandings and taken advantage of this "go-to person" when it came to concerns shared earlier. In other words, the Family Services Coordinator can serve as an important bridge between the new international parents and their child's preschool and help them navigate this new world with more ease.

Communicating via Technology

Just as in-person communication was a struggle for most of my study participants, communicating through technology was another learning curve new international parents had to navigate. The Early Education Center primarily relied on email and phone calls, but recently started to use the phone application "Remind" as tools to communicate with parents. Emails are widely used, effective, and an easy way for a school to deliver messages to parents. However, how well the email messages are received and comprehended by new international parents remains unclear. To properly respond to an email requires a higher level of English language skills and good reading comprehension, as well as writing accuracy, including proper grammar, punctuation, and tone.

In fact, all study participants came from societies in which communication mainly occurs through the spoken word or "word of mouth," otherwise known as "oral cultures". Conversely, in Western world countries like the U.S., communication is presented through the processes of reading and writing, mainly referred to as "written cultures" (Chamberlin, 2003). Thus, for the newly arrived international parents, this phenomenon i.e., "email culture" is new and adds to other complexities they face during their transition period.

Consider how this mother from Albania who is new to the country described her experiences:

> Everything in here is in emails. Sometimes, I get so many emails from my school, and now I have emails from my child's school that I hardly manage to read all of them. I will have a look but rarely respond as it takes so much time. My English is not good, so it is hard for me to write a proper email. (Nora, Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

Similarly, Li Na, mother of four-year-old Aleo from China, pointed out that many people in the U.S. prefer to write an email rather than talk in person, which contradicts the way she communicated in her home country. She said:

> In China, we don't do too many emails like here. I think people here prefer to email you rather than talk to you in person. Sometimes, I know a lot of things in the email. If you're not paying attention or have hard time to understand it, you just lose it. I only read the email if it is from Aleo's teacher. And if there is an issue, I will talk to his teacher about it the next morning in school. (Li Na, Individual Interview, January 31, 2020)

Another key issue uncovered during the interviews was that some parents never received emails from school. In fact, these parents only learned during the interviews that not only the teacher, but the school also occasionally sends emails. Once this situation was clarified, it appeared that the school had an incorrect email address, and therefore the emails never reached the parent. "I learned from the other parent that there is going to be an event in Maryam's school. It seems the school sent that email earlier, but I have never received it. When I checked with the secretary, they have wrong email address" (Mustafa, Individual Interview, December 9, 2019).

It is important to mention, as parents assimilated to American life, they gradually became part of that culture and writing emails became a daily practice. Haifa said:

> When we first came, I really didn't pay much attention to my emails. But living here I learned that it is considered disrespectful if you don't reply to your emails. So I check my emails every day and try to reply to the emails that needs to be replied. (Haifa, Individual Interview, November 14, 2019)

Maria, a mother from Mexico, stated the same, “I prefer emails than other ways of communication. Cause with the emails I have time to reflect and then respond, something you cannot do over the phone or in-person” (Maria, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020).

In addition to email, teachers and school used phone calls, text messages in the cases of emergencies, written notes, and the phone application “Remind.” Parents reported that these modes of communication were highly satisfying, giving a lot of preference to the app, “Remind.”

In addition, four out of thirteen participants expressed a wish that the school provide a livestream of their child’s classroom. Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, shared:

> I like emails, phone calls, text message and notes Maryam bring home sometimes. But I wish the school had a camera so I could watch Maryam at school. Because I remember like back home, they had a nice program, you create an account and you watch your kid since you dropped them off until you pick them up. (Mustafa, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

The same sentiment was echoed by Nora from Albania:

> One thing I like in Albanian school that I don’t see here is the camera. Not because I don't trust teachers or other people, but for example I'm in my office and I'm very curious to know what my kid is doing. If there was a camera and I would see what she's doing, then I would feel like better. So, it's again it is not because I don't trust the teachers, but the idea is that it would make me more comfortable as a parent. In Albania, which is not a very developed country, there are many schools where they have camera and parents can check that every day. (Nora Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

This quotation is further evidence from the data on how international parents relied on their background knowledge comparing the life and the resources from their home country to their

host country. While parents had many avenues to stay connected to their children's school, their desire to have a livestream camera was something they missed from their home country. Even though their desire to watch their children was not a trust issue, it was something they have experienced before and one that made them feel comfortable. In addition to having a livestream camera, study participants shared ideas highlighted below on how school can better support them in terms of communication.

Translation/interpretation services. When asked for their suggestions to improve services at school, study participants said they wanted a more personal connection, such as in-person meetings, which provide a space to talk, share ideas, and build relationships. Those who were not that confident in their English language abilities expressed a need for interpreters. However, participants said they were hesitant to ask the school for that service as they did not want to burden the school with their issues. But if the school offered interpretation services, international parents would definitely take advantage of the services. For instance, Wang Jing and Li Na, both mothers from China, stated that, "Even though we know English, it is still so hard to follow the conversation. They speak so fast and if there is was a translator, we would feel more comfortable talking to the teacher" (Wang Jang & Li Na, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020). When asked if they are willing to support using other parents as translators if the school asks them to, they all wholeheartedly agreed to support the school in any way they could.

Modified family handbook/Parent survival guide. All parents mentioned receiving a "family handbook" from their children's preschool before school started. In general, they found the handbook very informative and useful as it gave overall information about the school practices and policies. However, again due to heavy text and language limitations, it was hard for them to take full advantage of the handbook. Therefore, they expressed a need for a more parent-

friendly, short, and culturally responsive handbook that is easier to navigate. Moreover, they wanted to have another handbook that would describe more in-depth the classroom teaching and learning practices, as well as the teacher's expectations for them and their children. They called it a "parent survival guide" rather than a "classroom handbook." Case in point, Maria, a mother of three children who has extensive experience working with the Early Education Center, recalled her first-year struggles as an international parent despite her high level of English and the fact she lived in the United States for several years. Maria suggested the importance of a class handbook that explains the teaching and learning moments, as well as overall expectations in a short, concise, very detailed, and culturally responsive way. Here is how she described her concept of a parent survival guide:

> I think for me I would like kind of a survival guide like a manual or a handbook of every area in the classroom. Things like when they go to the bathroom, this is the expectation for the student. This is what the teacher will help with. If they have an accident, this is the expectation, this is what the student or what the teacher will help with. This is what happens during the mealtime, what can I bring for my child's lunch and things like that. What about the cubbies? What kind of items can be in the cubbies? And again, they're very little things that might be automatic which is new to a new people, right? Even coming in last year, I'm like, okay, pick a symbol. What does that mean? Okay, got it. Then how often is the symbol going to be used? Should I put on my child's things, things like that. The mechanics, I guess that's important. And then every area in the classroom, because the teachers are very knowledgeable and they know exactly how their classroom works, the whole system. But as parents, we are the outsiders and when we walk in and if we see something that we maybe don't agree with at first, I think, at least for me, I'm

> hesitant to ask because it's like, well maybe that's just how it is. (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

This idea was highly supported by other participants as they were looking for somewhere to find answers to their culturally sensitive questions. Having the guide written in the languages familiar to the parents would certainly add invaluable knowledge and understanding to the concerns parents have about the class and the teaching and learning process in their children's new school.

Modified orientation meeting for parents. An orientation meeting is basically an introduction to the Early Education Center for the year. Therefore, the meeting should be set up in a way that parents get answers to all their questions and leave inspired by the knowledge they gained about the school, feeling certain that this is a place where they can wholeheartedly trust their children will be treated with kindness and compassion. These meetings are very important for all parents, particularly for international parents. All my study participants acknowledged the fact that teachers and administrators at the Early Education Center are trying their best to accommodate parents' need for more information about the school and its programs. However, as mentioned earlier, adding a safe space to openly discuss culturally sensitive questions or, as stated in the previous section, the "hidden rules" was something parents wanted to include during this meeting. All study participants expressed the wish to add to the meeting time or even extend it. Adding the opportunity to learn more in-depth about the school and its curriculum, as well as meet with teachers and other school personnel in small groups and more importantly, meet other parents to build connections, would be ideal. Wang Li, a mother from China, stated:

> I attended the orientation, but it so much information in short time. For me the problem is I need some help. I need someone to talk because I have the capability to express myself and communicate in English. But the problem is I do not know what issues I can bring

> forward for discussion. I do not know. Can I discuss this with the teachers or is it the parents' responsibility. So I need someone to help me to know what issues I can talk with whom. Maybe I should talk with the office faculty in the EEC, maybe with the teachers or maybe I should never bring it up and it should deal with my kids in private. But if I learn that during the orientation meeting that will help me so much. It is so important to learn about the school at the levels, like I didn't know they had a Parent Services Coordinator. (Wang Li, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

In addition, orientation meetings provide an opportunity to deeply discuss the family and class handbook with other parents and school personnel. As Liu Yang mentioned, "It's impossible for the parents to have the time and energy to read over the brochure and the handouts. We are more comfortable maybe with a face-to-face communication discussing it together with other parents who had their children at school before" (Liu Yang, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019).

Hotline or an online space for parents' Q & A (questions and answers). As it is evident from the data, my study participants searched for various avenues to find answers to their questions and concerns. Sharing various ideas during the focus group interviews, the study participants came up with the idea for the school to have a hotline or an online space, like a discussion board on the school website, where parents could openly pose their questions, share concerns, or discuss a situation with other parents or school personnel with the idea to find a true solution.

It is clear from the findings that every family has different support and communication needs. Once effective and open communication is a part of the school culture, it builds understanding and trust between teachers and parents. When schools and parents understand and

trust each other, they would be better able to work together to support children's wellbeing and development. Therefore, effective communication is key to establishing and maintaining positive partnerships with parents from all walks of life.

Volunteering in Classes and School Events

Volunteering at your child's school in the United States provides an excellent opportunity for parents to show that they value and care about their children's education. Depending on the school type there are lots of opportunities to volunteer, like providing extra support to struggling readers, making photocopies, helping during lunchtime, assisting on field trips, running fundraising events, etc. As with other practices the idea of in-school volunteering was another new experience international parents had to uncover and understand. In the international parents' experience, parents would only intervene or become involved if there was an academic or behavioral issue at school. Therefore, the idea of a parent as "a helper" to the teacher or to school was confusing to the international parents, as they questioned in what ways they can help or support the teacher or the school. For instance, Wang Jing, a mother from China shared, "In China, in my experience schools don't want parents to be involved. Teachers do a good job teaching and they will only call parents if your child has any problem" (Wang Jing, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020). Similarly, Amir, a father from Pakistan, stated, "We grew up with a clear boundary that it is teachers' job to work with children at school and parents' job to take care of kids at home. So I have no idea how can I help the teachers or the school" (Amir, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019). The same was echoed by Wang Li, a mother from China:

> I would like to volunteer at Alice's preschool but I think I do not know about that part. Because there's no one here to tell me or educate me, but I think I needed that kind of

> help to tell me what is my responsibility. So, I can only understand this from my understanding and my culture, what is my responsibility. But I really wish to learn from the American parents, what is their responsibility, why do they volunteer, how much they get involved in their child's school. I wish to have families, or teachers, lecturer, to talk about this with me. Since I had my doctoral study here, I know, like, parents for their kids' sake they should actively participate. (Wang Li, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Apart from this, many international parents in this study learned about the benefits of volunteering for their children and for themselves, while others, after volunteering at their child's preschool, questioned the practice even more. Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, said:

> I actually did volunteer here at the EEC many times. Last time we brought food and we had one tea conversation. I like to volunteer even if it is not about Maryam. It is something I like to help, you know, because I'm here for like a period of time. So each volunteer I go to I learn something. So it's not just about school, it is for yourself too. (Amir, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

In contrast, Amir, a father from Pakistan, after volunteering at his child's preschool during field trip, stated, "I want to help school but not in a way to chase kids….if I come and they are sending me to the field trip to chase kids…I don't think that practice is …it is not normal in my country" (Amir, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019). Certainly for most of the parents, it was a matter of busy life schedule and various life circumstances that didn't allow them to actively volunteer at their children's school, like in the case of Haifa, a mother from Saudi Arabia:

> I know how important for me to volunteer at my children's school. It helps me so much to learn about my children and how they are doing at school. It also helps to build closer connection with the teacher and know the curriculum better. I try my best, but you know, that I'm a student here full time with the three kids and alone and that's why I cannot always volunteer. (Haifa, Individual Interview, November 14, 2019)

As all participants shared concerns about what is expected from them in their child's preschool and only relied on what their background educational and cultural knowledge allowed them to understand, they missed a lot on what was going on in the school. Even though school offered different activities for parents to participate in and be part of the school, since they did not understand the meaning behind those events, they were either reluctant to participate, never attended, or attended once and stopped attending afterwards. Here are the main activities the EEC conducted to provide more opportunities for parents to volunteer and take part in the life of their children's school, including parent teacher conferences, family connection organization, community festival, and the like. The next section will provide further explanation for each event.

Parent Teacher Conferences

All my study participants were quite familiar with the concept of parent teacher conferences as they had experience attending those meetings back in their home countries. As most of the participants described, back in their home countries, parent teacher meetings provided a space to discuss not only the successes and challenges of the students, but also captured a broader picture discussing the class or the school community as a whole. Therefore, attending the meetings one-on-one with the teacher was a new experience for the international

parents. Moreover, it was the only instance where parents felt invited and welcomed as the invitation came directly from their teacher.

As Li Jing, a mother from China stated:

> I knew what the parent teacher conference is about, because I was a teacher in public school here in the U.S. I think the teacher put a lot of efforts and attention to each kid and the materials Ms. Pamela prepared is very helpful. You can see how she is devoted into each student. Yes, 15 minute is a little bit short time, but if you wanted to go to detailed conversation you need a little bit more time. (Li Jing, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019)

Li Na, another participant from China, shared:

> I think it is helpful because it gave you an opportunity to talk with your teacher and you are in the private environment. You can talk any, any questions or concerns. You can talk with your teacher. I think it's a good opportunity for teacher and parents because you have, you know, kind of time. (Li Na, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Similarly, Maria, a mother from Mexico, stated:

> “I think in some cultures, even in Mexican culture, sometimes it's like the school is the expert, the school will handle it, whatever the school says we will follow. But here I think it has to be a combination of both parent and teacher. You know, I know my child at home and I've known him his whole life and you know him because you spent so much time with him on a daily basis that you might be able to tell me something I don't know or I might not see it and I might be able to tell you something you don't see every day. And so I think it's a combination of both that we can discuss during parent teacher

> conference, something that would never happen in Mexico. (Maria, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Overall, participants expressed high satisfaction with how teachers conducted and interacted with parents during parent teacher conference. Parents were also highly grateful for teachers who offered office hours to meet with parents if needed. The only thing they wished for was a longer time, at least 20-25 minutes, and the frequency of the meeting, at least two times a semester, at the beginning and at the end. Lakshmi, a mother from India, shared:

> With my busy school schedule, this conference is the only time I can meet with Nitesh's teacher. I think it will be very helpful to have it twice, at the beginning and at the end of the semester where you can discuss the progress over the semester. And a little bit longer like 20-25 minutes, as other parents were waiting, I wasn't comfortable talking more to the teacher. (Lakshmi, Individual Interview, February 2, 2020)

Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

Parent Teacher Association (PTA) is the school wide parent/teacher organization composed of parent representatives from each classroom and all members of the Early Education Center community. The specific purposes of PTA are to offer multiple avenues for families to participate in the life of the school, support the development of relationships among families and teachers through various events, advise the school on policies related to families and children, and support the center in securing resources for the children's program through a variety of fundraising activities. The members of the PTA also have a voice on the EEC Advisory Board and the Internal Review Board of research that is proposed and conducted at the Center. Even though the purpose of the PTA is clearly stated in the family handbook and discussed during the

orientation meetings, the study participants still could not comprehend the meaning behind this organization and found it hard to join and to become productive members of the organization.

Wang Li shared her experience attending the meeting:

> I attended one of the PTA meeting, but because I do not know, for example, I noticed the parents who talk dominantly is the white parent, still, the white parents, because they grew up here, they know the culture. They have the local connection. And so, they dominantly talk in this parent conference. And so, the Chinese parents, and other parents, they listen more. But, still, we lack the information base. We do not know what they are talking, and we lack the knowledge to really integrate with them. (Wang Li, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Similarly, Zhan Wei, a father from China, pointed to the fact that not being born here and not understanding the context well enough hinders his desire to join the organization. Even though he attended once, he thought he could not contribute to the discussion and thus stopped attending afterwards. He said:

> I did attend the meeting once, but I really did not follow what they were talking about because I was not born here. So like deep in my heart, I'm not confident enough, like I know the limits or the boundaries of the conversation. But if you have no idea what they are talking about you don't have anything to say, especially when it comes to some sensitive or critical issues. So I need someone like maybe, I think the school can have a coordinator or you know, some personnel, especially to help the international parents to understand the meaning behind these meetings, so we can join and be part of this. It really didn't make sense to me, so I stopped attending. (Zhan Wei, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

These challenges were echoed by all participants. Being unfamiliar with the new school system in their host country, the concept of PTA was hard to comprehend (Homby & Blackwell, 2018; Jafarov, 2015). Therefore, even if six out of thirteen participants expressed desire to explore the event and be part of it, they stopped attending after one or two attempts, mainly because they did not see their contribution to the association.

In contrast, three participants, who were somewhat familiar with the concept due to having prior experiences with their children's schooling, were active members of the PTA, acknowledging the time, understanding, and effort it took them to become part of this endeavor. Two other participants who were new to the country admitted that they have never heard about PTA and its existence in their children's school. In addition, ten out of thirteen participants questioned how their participation in PTA could help their children's learning at school. But despite all that, these ten study participants still expressed desire to better understand the meaning behind the PTA and explore the opportunities to become part of the association.

Community Festival

Once a year at the EEC, a community festival is held to showcase special talents of parents, including making cultural presentations to share their home culture. Community Festival is another opportunity for international families to volunteer and participate in the life of their children's school. The festival is usually during the fall semester. The event is open to the public and the school encourages every family to attend and/or to showcase any special talent, cultural artifacts, food, and the like. All study participants had an opportunity to attend and to present during the festival. Everyone was quite pleased with the chance to present their culture or any other special talent their family possessed.

Wang Li, a mother from China, stated:

> I loved the community festival. All the Chinese parents, we come together to present our Chinese culture factors, food, clothes, calligraphy, a lot of things. And also the kids helped us, when they observe they will know more about their own culture too. It was great to kind of promote our own culture while integrate with a local culture. (Wang Li, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

The same was stated, by a mother from Albania, Nora:

> It was very helpful. I learned so much about other families here at the EEC, it's very good. I love diversity in my life. I like to see different cultures and I also want Emerson to see different cultures and meet other people and see what is going on around the world. I think this festival was very eye opening for me and my husband. I shared some traditional Albanian food during the festival. (Nora, Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

Undoubtedly, all my study participants spoke highly about community festival by sharing how this event provided an open space to show "who they are" and how their cultural diversity was embraced by the school community. Their only desire remained to have more opportunities throughout the year where they can openly share about their family diversity to their children's school, using that as an opportunity to volunteer. Liu Yang shared:

> I think maybe, you know, we are international families. I will be glad to introduce my home culture, maybe during the special holidays, and, like the spring festival, and other things. And also, maybe, related to our major. I'm glad to introduce some, like some math concepts. [laughter] but I don't think kids will love it [laughter]. (Liu Yang, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

The same was echoed by Zhan Wei, a father from China:

> I would say we join all the events, for example, during the community festival, I tried to participate, so, I asked Alex's teacher, probably, emailed her about some possible chemistry demonstration, but unfortunately the chemistry demonstration wasn't that suitable. But I can improvise and make it suitable for the age of kids and maybe show it in class. That could be one way I could volunteer, if that works. (Zhan Wei, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Altogether, community festival was among one of the most favorite and meaningful events for international parents. Besides being a fun, interesting, and engaging event, it offered the international parents a space to represent their cultural identity, fostered their pride as an international parent in the U.S., and strengthened relationships between them, other families, and the school community. All participants expressed gratitude to the school for organizing the festival. Maria stated, "I am so grateful to the school for organizing this event. Me and my family enjoy attending the festival every year, there is so much to learn from each other, and my kids love to see their friends and teachers at school" (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020).

Families Connecting with Families: International Friendship Program

This program is a new initiative (piloted in Fall 2019) the center took to specifically target the international parents. The program pairs new international families with an American family or experienced international families for the purpose of exchanging culture and sharing knowledge in a unique and fulfilling way. In addition, the partner family provides support to the new international family as they acclimate to the school and to American society by answering questions and providing guidance to appropriate resources. For example, new international families often need information about pediatricians, dentists, and after school activities for their

children. In terms of school, they may have questions about how to approach the teacher, parent/teacher conferences, and participation in school-wide events. Being involved in the International Friendship Program provides partner families with the opportunity to learn about a new culture and to develop a true international friendship.

Even though the goal of the program sounds like the best remedy for what was mentioned in the earlier section about "having someone to talk to," not all study participants were aware of the program at the EEC. Since this was the first time the program was offered, only one out of thirteen participants was part of the program and was highly satisfied with the results. Maria joined the program in the beginning of the semester and shared her experience:

> I am part of the friendship program and that's so wonderful you know, just trying to read the reflections every day and have a conversation with them about it. We take the kids out sometime and talk about different stuff, like cultural differences, parenting concerns and how we can help each other in any way we can. It is amazing that the program connected us that would never happen otherwise. (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

As Maria was the only person to benefit the program, when asked if she recommends the program to other international parents, she stated the following:

> Yeah, definitely, I love it. I know we're still friends and we tried to see each other a lot. You know, right now it doesn't happen because it's winter and everybody gets sick and I am sick, let's avoid, sharing germs. But when the weather was warm we saw each other quite a bit and, I can say that it's a true friendship. Like I consider her a true friend, not just like an assigned friend, if that makes sense. I think it's been beneficial for both of us. You know, I really enjoyed learning about her culture and I've enjoyed, helping her in

> whatever capacity she needs. Even, like I said, if it's a small question. (Maria, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Based on Maria's experience with the program, the International Friendship Program can be a key solution. All study participants expressed a desire to learn about their new host country's life and cultural and societal norms. By providing that human connection (Rogoff, 2003), participants can receive the best education about their new home.

International Relocatee Parents' Tea Party

This program was another new pilot program the EEC started during the Fall 2019 semester. The main purpose of this program is to provide an informal space in the form of a "tea party" for international parents to come together, connect, and build relationships with the other parents as well as the school personnel. The event was specifically tailored to the needs of new international parents with the aim to connect them with other parents as well as help them during their transition period to their host country.

Over the course of the semester, three tea parties were offered which were well received and attended by international families. One tea party was hosted by one of the parents while the two others took place at the center. During this informal event all international parents came together to get to know each other, make friends, and build relationships with each other. They also met the school personnel in person and gained a better understanding of their role in school. Li Na, a mother from China, shared her experience:

> Yes, this semester me and my husband joined the international tea party. At that time we talked about the children, how to identify themselves and I just talk about my child situation because he just recognized he's a Chinese, he's different from others. So sometimes he just upset, oh my English is not good or something like this. So we talk

> about these ways with Mary (school director) and Ruth (family services coordinator), and other parents. We learned he is learning more about himself at this age and that will take a while to make sure he feels comfortable and safe in this environment. It was so helpful to meet other parents and share our questions. I really like the tea party where I can meet and talk to other parents from school. (Li Na Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Moreover, talking about the benefits of the in-person communication during the tea, it has to be noted how meeting someone in-person helped international parents to connect names to their faces and become aware of role that person has at their children's school. This is what Yu Li, a mother from China attending the tea party, stated:

> It was so nice to meet the School Director Mary and the Family Services Coordinator, Ruth in person during the tea party. I think every week we get the EEC news, email and in the email in one section they, you know, introduce Ruth the Family Services Coordinator but when I actually met her in person and she talked about her work at school, it made so much sense. I really liked this program since it helps you to make friends and meet with other parents and school workers at my child's school. (Yu Li, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Zhan Wei, a father from China, stated the other benefit of this program, "I think I only attended one tea party for international parents and it is very useful, let's see for example, the international tea party hook up all the Chinese families together, and then we had a barbeque afterwards [laughter]" (Zhan Wei, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019).

While perspectives divided over the discussion on if the tea party could only be offered for international parents or should include every parent whose children attend the EEC, the study participants proposed the following: if the tea party was offered two times per semester, having

one only for international parents and the second for everyone could help a lot. For example, there are some questions that only relate to what international parents can discuss among themselves, while meeting non-international parents will help to make friends and learn about other issues that every parents is facing. As Wang Jing mentioned, “Like the international tea party I think is a good way to bring all international parents together. Oh this is for the international parents so maybe we have to come. We also have many questions in common to discuss with each other so that will be very helpful” (Wang Jing, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020).

Ali, a father from Saudi Arabia, shared his support of the tea party for everyone:

> I like the idea of tea party for international parents but kind of an in general tea party that is not limited to the international parents. I think it is also helpful as it helps us to meet and talk with American parents. I think we have a lot to share and learn from each other. (Ali, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Since the idea of an informal gathering was so appealing to the study participants, one of their last suggestions was to have an informal tea party with their child’s teacher at the EEC. After brainstorming the idea, Maria, a mother from Mexico, concluded:

> I think we all agreed that it'd be helpful if we had kind of like we had the international parents tea party or like a tea with the teacher and where I think conferences are more formal and you're to hearing about what they're doing, what they're not doing. But it would be nice to have the teacher and then to have the parents and not necessarily focus on the, the child, but the class, what does the class need, you know, how is the class doing with a certain area? How do we support the teacher with that area? I think it'd be

> nice to have a less formal, less child focus, more, more group focused time with the teacher. (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Not every study participant had a chance to take part in the international tea party. However, six parents who attended the events expressed high satisfaction and desire for more attendance. As this practice is not based on normalized white middle-class cultural pattern of parental involvement (Morales-Alexander, 2020), it met the needs of international parents who desired more informal interactions with school personnel (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). In addition, the informal tea party could serve as one of the alternative ways to involve international parents. This is where parents get to know each other, school personnel, and other parents on a more personal level, sharing their stories and building trusting relationships with each other and the school personnel (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021).

Birthday Book Project

Another new initiative the EEC took to embrace family diversity with the intention to bring more equity, inclusion, and diversity into the Early Education Center is the launch of a "Birthday Book Project." The main purpose of the project is for parents to donate a children's book that is reflective of their language and culture to be shared with the student population at the school. The library materials are not required reading nor are they included in instruction without clear ties to a lesson, but they can be used by parents or teachers to enrich curriculum, promote home language maintenance, and learn about different languages and cultures.

The library also possesses several books in different languages that could be very useful for the international relocatee parents in case they want to borrow and read the book at home with their children. Since the library was only opened in October 2019 and the interviews took place from November 2019 to February 2020, it was a very short time to evaluate the impact and

the use of the library. However, when asked if the study participants were aware and used any of the library materials, it appeared they weren't aware and didn't use any materials from the library yet.

Nevertheless, all study participants embraced the idea of the library and expressed their desire to donate books in their home language or support the initiative in any other way they could, if only the school would let them know and seek their partnership in this regard. Nora, a mother from Albania, shared her thoughts:

> I love the idea that you have books in different languages. Sometime it is so hard to find books here in your language, but if you can get them from school that will be so helpful. And I have some small children's books in Albanian that I can donate as Emerson does not use them anymore. I am sure if there will be another family from Albania they will find them useful. (Nora Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

Summary

For the most part, international relocatee parents, despite their unfamiliarity and inexperience with the idea of in-school volunteering, showed an enormous interest in the projects that were meaningful to them. Once they realized and had a clear picture of the meaning behind in-school volunteering, including its social, cultural, and academic benefits, they are eager to share their time, knowledge, and wisdom without any hesitation with their children's school. However, that can only happen if school is willing to partner with international relocatee parents, providing them with an open invitation to volunteer and proper guidance (Isik-Ercan, 2018; Morales-Alexander, 2020).

School Governance and Decision Making

Contributing to the decision making and governance of the school was found to be the least popular type of involvement among the 13 international parents that I interviewed for this study. Although it was clearly stated in the family handbook that parents are invited to be part of the decision making and governance of the school through the Advisory Board and the Internal Review Board of research that is proposed and conducted at the Center, participants in the study had a very limited understanding of their role in this process. Even Maria and Li Jing, who were among the most active community members with long life experiences in the U.S. in my sample, wished to be part of the decision-making process, but due to various life circumstances were not able to join and contribute to the governance of the school. Maria stated:

> I would love to be part of the parent connection, parent committee or advisory board to share my voice in the decision making of the school here at the EEC, but for me it's mostly time, time factor. The meetings are usually after 5 p.m. and by that kids get so cranky that I can't keep them anymore at school. Once time allows I will definitely join. (Maria, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

It is worth mentioning that as the data revealed in countries like Saudi Arabia, India, Pakistan, China, Albania, and Mexico, parents usually are not expected to take part in the decision making or school governance. Thus, this practice was novel, unfamiliar, and not very meaningful to them. In contrast, parental involvement as an advocate and decision maker in their children's school is clearly highlighted in school policy documents including the EEC Family Handbook.

Parental Involvement Practices Used in Community

Collaboration with community, the final type of parental involvement in the classification by Epstein (2010), was also not very evident in the interview data. The study participants did not mention their involvement in any activities that connect communities with school programs or resources provided by schools for families. However, parents talked a lot about their interest in community involvement practices. According to the data sample, parents believe that involving children in age-appropriate activities, which take place in local communities, contributes to the early learning and development of their children. Since this study focus is on parental involvement practices and why parents deem those practices important, I wanted to present the data in this section.

It should be noted, all study participants showed high interest in learning and exploring the resources available in their local and school communities. In order to fully participate in the social life of their local communities, it is imperative to be aware of the available resources. In addition, involvement in various community events contributes to the social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development of families and their children. This is what Wang Li, a mother from China, shared:

> I take Alice to the city Public Library every Tuesday evening for the story time. I also take her to a lot of social and cultural activities I know, for example, the homecoming, to take her to pick up candies, and the Halloween parade at the city downtown. And I take her to swimming every week to the recreation center. I think these activities are so important for her early learning and I see how much she enjoys being with people, especially the library in downtown. (Wang Li Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Lui Yang, a mother from China, supported the same idea:

> William is taking swimming and skating classes this semester. We skate together and we plan to go to the snow to ski together, this winter. He is also interested in rockets and airplanes. And we bought a lot of book for him about planes and rockets. We take him to the museums, parks, concerts and the Science Center in the city. And he loves it. We, went there, I think, one hundred times. We are thinking to take him to Sunday Chinese School to learn Chinese. (Lui Wang, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019).

Zhan Wei emphasized how important it is for his family to be involved in the community and how it contributes to the social and emotional development of his child. He said:

> We try our best to involve Alex in different activities after school. There lots of parks around here so we go hike and bike over the weekends. We take him to playgrounds. So, that's a good thing. We try to take him to different events if we know about them. The good thing is there always some different events around here. Just a couple days ago, there was a trick-or-treat in the city downtown. We take him there and then actually stayed with some Chinese family together and Alex was playing with other kids. Oh, and he just started swimming. I think this helps him a lot to learn to be around other people. (Zhan Wei, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

The same sentiment was echoed by other participants as well. Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, stated:

> I know how important it is for Maryam to be involved in other activities, but sometimes I find it hard to find the resources. I actually want to, I was always searching, looking for some like gymnastics or taekwondo or other activities for kids during the weekend, but cannot find one around here. I think it would help a lot if school can help us to find the

> resources in the nearby community, what I know is what my friends tell me. (Mustafa, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Similarly, Nora, a mother from Albania, who was new to the country, also stated a desire to learn more about the resources that are available off campus and invited the center to use more social media to connect to parents, as well as disseminate information among parents who might be aware of the local resources. Here is what she said:

> It would be very, very nice if here at the EEC they get all that information about different events that happen on campus and off campus, put it together and give it to parents. Like there is something during the weekend that you can attend with your children, or for example, you can even do something like a hashtag on Instagram or Facebook or something saying that this is for parents about everything going around, something like that. (Nora, Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

In fact, all participants in the study were looking for ways to involve their children either in afterschool activities or activities in the local community that could support their child's early learning and development. This interest in active involvement is another indicator of how committed international parents are to the early education and holistic development of their children. Despite all the struggles they face in their transition and adaptation period in their host country, the education and well-being of their young children remains their first priority. Therefore, exposing them to various community resources through school and encouraging them to participate would undoubtedly enrich their social and cultural capital, which is so crucial to their smooth integration into a new society.

Influences and Challenges to Better Parental Involvement

Below is an explanation of ways international parents are influenced and challenged in their methods of parental involvement.

Parents' Initial Dissatisfaction with the Inquiry-Based, Play Oriented Curriculum

All my study participants shared a traditional teaching and learning background. Therefore, when confronted with the new teaching and learning environment, parents started to question the quality of the education their children were receiving in their new host country (Antony-Newman, 2020; Tobin et al., 2013; 2016; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). In particular, parents had a hard time understanding the expectations their children's school had for them. In addition, the inquiry-based, play oriented curriculum was novel for most of the parents. While three parents expressed satisfaction with play-based learning, ten out of thirteen parents shared concerns about the academic rigor of the curriculum and said they feared that their children will not be well prepared to enter formal schooling in the U.S. In a way, this misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the curriculum creates a barrier that hinders the effective involvement of international parents in their children's education in their host country. The section below will further explore this phenomenon.

Expectations. For most of my study participants, the Early Education Center was the first encounter with the U.S. school culture (Gay, 2010; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Tobin et al., 2013, 2016; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). Therefore, they did not have a clear understanding of what to expect from their children's preschool. Specifically, nine out of thirteen participants who were new to the school system, including two who were new to the country, expressed the most concerns about not understanding what was expected from them in their young child's preschool (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Tobin et al., 2013, 2016).

As Wang Li, a mother from China, shared, “Actually, I don’t know what my child’s school expects from me as a parent, because there’s no one here to tell me or to educate me. But I think, I need help to tell me what is my responsibility in my child’s school” (Wang Li Individual Interview, November 5, 2019). Nora, a mother from Albania, shared the same concern, “In Albania, the school does not expect much of parent participation, but here I think it is not only expected but encouraged. I want to be involved more in my child’s school, but I don’t know how” (Nora Individual Interview, November 18, 2019). Similarly, Zhang Wei, a father from China, stated that due to not having a clear understanding behind their involvement in their children’s school activities, he is simply following his instincts on what to do. He said, “I really don’t have a clear understanding how can I support my child at school, what can I do here unless someone is telling me. We are just doing something by instinct” (Zhang Wei, Individual Interview, November 1, 2019).

The same sentiment was echoed by participants from Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and India, countries where parents saw a clear boundary between home and school and parents’ roles solely remain as a support at home (Antony-Newman, 2020). Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, stated, “I never saw or remember my mom or dad came to my school for any other reasons if there was a meeting or if I misbehaved” (Mustafa, Individual Interview, December 9, 2019).

The opposite view was stated only by one parent, who has lived in the U.S. for many years and seemed more comfortable understanding and meeting the expectations of the school. Maria, a mother from Mexico, shared:

> It was hard for me at the beginning when my first child attended school, but now that I have a long experience with my children’s schools and I know what to expect it is a bit

easier, so I do understand what you are talking about. (Maria, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Clearly, my study participants, in particular eight parents who recently immigrated to the U.S. and three parents whose oldest child had just entered school, struggled to understand what their children's school expected from them as parents and what role they can play in their children's school (Antony-Newman, 2020; Morales-Alexander, 2020; Isik-Ercan, 2018; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). However, two parents who had experience working and dealing with their children's school expressed a better understanding of school expectations. They verbalized the fact that there are hidden, unwritten rules in the schools that one only learns and understands by living in this culture, which requires time. Since U.S. mainstream schools' expectations, rules, and regulations are based on the Western cultural norms, it is assumed by school personnel that those who do not share that background will automatically understand and follow those rules and expectations. However, as the findings revealed, those parents who are new to the country need time and assistance to better understand the rules and regulations that are not explicitly stated by the school personnel.

In addition to unwritten rules, parents shared concerns about the inquiry-based, play oriented curriculum that their children are exposed to in their preschool. The next section will provide further explanation on the topic.

Teaching and Learning, Curriculum Differences. Teachers use of a variety of teaching and learning practices and curriculum in the Early Education Center represented a completely new world to the study participants. All thirteen international parents shared a much more traditional teaching and learning background. Facing the new learning environment, which is warm, welcoming, and designed to support students' emotional well-being and includes

references to students' identities, families, and communities, left parents with more questions than answers. They did not understand how teaching and learning occurred in this new environment where the child-centered curriculum was practiced. Similarly, seeing teachers as open, caring, and responsive to the learner's needs while giving students freedom to construct knowledge for themselves stood in sharp contrast to their image of a teacher, who is a giver of knowledge or a "conduit of knowledge" (Livingston, 2017), controlling, authoritarian, and strictly follows the prescribed curriculum. This was another new revelation for international parents, in particular the newcomers.

Therefore, international parents were excited to share their perspectives on differences in teaching and learning between the U.S. and their home countries. For example, a mother from China, Liu Yang, mentioned:

> There is a big difference between the preschool in the U.S. and China. In Chinese preschool they teach kids the letters and do lots of memorization of poems and they ask kids to follow rules strictly. But here in the U.S. it is not a teacher, it's a friend. My son loves his teacher. In China we have big class sizes and children sit at the tables but here it is small class size and the relationship between the teacher and the kids is so different. Teacher gives many homework, so even the kids in daycare in China, have homework. (Liu Yang, Individual Interview, November 5, 2019)

Similarly, Nora, a parent from Albania, pointed to the fact that the EEC teacher provided different choices of activities and gave the children freedom to make their own choices. Learning from this experience, Nora changed her perspective about always making choices for her child and instead she began letting her child make his own choices. She said:

> I love, love, love as I mentioned many times the way they teach here, the way the teacher organizes many activities, guides and talks to the children. The teachers are very open, knowledgeable and kind. In Albania, the preschools are more focused on memorizing lots of poems and the children will do a little show in front of parents by end of each term. Here, I like when the teacher lets the children choose an activity. I started to do that at home with Emerson too. (Nora, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019)

The same was echoed by other participants who compared the different teaching and learning approaches, contrasting them with their own educational backgrounds or what is prevalent in their home countries. Even though all the parents said they were quite happy with what they saw in their children's preschool in the U.S., they lacked a deeper understanding of how this new teaching and learning approach facilitates their children's early learning and development. Thus, when asked what is important for children to learn at the preschool age and if they see this happening in their children's classroom, most of the parents emphasized academic growth in forms of knowing the letters and numbers, learning poems by heart, being able to draw well, playing a musical instrument, learning a new language, and the like.

Wang Jing, mother of four-year-old James from China, stated, "From three years old in China they teach letters and numbers, drawing, music, learn English language and other things, but here it's like there is no class there. And they just encourage kids to do their own things" (Wang Jing, Individual Interview, November 7, 2019). Amir, father of three-year-old Nazmin from Pakistan, supported the same conclusion, stating, "I see Nazmin socially confident and I know she learned that at her school, however I would like to see more academics skills like reading, writing and basic math, but if it is only playing then she will not develop cognitively" (Amir, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019).

In contrast, three out of thirteen participants emphasized how their children's preschool contributed to the emotional intelligence of their children and that they felt that was very important for their children at this age. Lakshmi, mother of four-year-old Nitesh from India, stressed the importance of developing good character and morals at the preschool age rather than focusing on academic skills. Here is how she framed it:

> I feel at this age Nitesh should learn how to respect adults, and how to behave well when with people, how to talk to people and we just want well, behavior, well manners. I see a lot of changes in Nitesh because it's been two and a half years here. He is growing good and he is behaving well comparatively and that is very important for me at this age. We are really happy with his school and his development here and want to say 'thank you' to his teachers and school personnel. (Lakshmi, Individual Interview, December 7, 2019)

Haifa, a mother from Saudi Arabia, stated the same:

> At this age for Salima, I am not focusing that hard to learn numbers or letters. I want her just to learn how to behave and learn to be independent to learn to fulfill and express her needs, things like that on a personal level and I see she learned a lot of that at school. (Haifa, Individual Interview, November 14, 2019)

Lastly, a mother of three children, Maria from Mexico was the only one among the participants who had a deep understanding of her children's school curriculum and appreciated how teachers and the entire program contributed to the holistic i.e., physical, cognitive, social, and emotional development of her children. Understanding the underlying meaning behind the instructional practices, including play used at the EEC, Maria pointed to the fact that these practices lay a foundation for reading and writing, a concept which was not that visible to other parents. She said:

> For me, more emotional intelligence related things, empathy, being able to have social skills and relationships with their peers is highly important at this age. I know the school is doing a lot of activities that lay a foundation for reading and writing in kindergarten, but they just do those activities in a non-traditional way and I know they play a lot here at the EEC that builds the emotional intelligence. (Maria, Individual Interview, November 16, 2019)

Undoubtedly, all study participants' perspectives differed in terms of the satisfaction with the teaching and learning process in their children's new preschool. All thirteen participants were born, raised, and educated in a very traditional teaching and learning environment. Consequently, the way these parents evaluated their children's learning outcomes was based on their own cultural and educational backgrounds. However, it was evident from the findings that those parents who had lived in the U.S. for a longer period of time gained a better understanding of alternative ways of teaching and learning. Thus, they shifted their perspective and were more open to the constructivist teaching and learning that took place in their children's preschool.

In fact, one of the main reasons international parents questioned the academic rigor of the curriculum for their children was due to their misunderstanding of the concept of play. I found that the parents I interviewed were split between being supporters of the concept that play contributes to learning versus the idea that play distracts from learning. The next section will discuss this phenomenon in more detail.

Pre-school versus Play-School. The dichotomy of "pre-school versus play school" emerged from the data as the discussion evolved around curriculum satisfaction. I found that the parents I interviewed were split between three groups. Namely, five out of thirteen international

parents believed that play is not connected to learning, four parents supported the idea that play is connected to learning, and four parents were not certain if play had any connection to learning.

The eight international parents who were not supportive and certain about play versus learning defined the idea of learning as teacher-led activities using specific learning tools, like books, flashcards, worksheets, whiteboards, etc. In their definition, play was comprised of all unsupervised activities that children were engaged in, either inside or outside of their preschool classroom. These parents concluded that because they saw their children play during much of their time at the EEC, i.e., engaged in unsupervised activities, they believed that spending too much time playing left very little time for learning.

A mother from India, Lakshmi, stated:

> The teaching and learning style is very different here. Kids are very free. I see they are free to choose what they want to do in class. For me learning is when they have to sit, for example, sit down with the teacher and learn how to write their name one, or how to write their letters and so on. But when they chose one activity, and then move to another one, and another one without a teacher, I don't think they are learning that activities on their own. I think they only play with other kids doing that activity. But in the end of the day I don't know, I am not sure if playing helps learning. (Lakshmi, Individual Interview, February 7, 2020).

Similarly, Amir, a father from Pakistan, shared the same concerns about his child spending a lot of time playing which could result in a poor academic performance. Educated in a traditional school setting, he wondered if there is a relationship between play and cognitive development. As a statistician, he said he questioned the findings in studies of indirect learning or learning through play and wanted the school to provide scientific evidence on how play

curriculum contributes to the development of cognitive skills. In his opinion, cognitive skills are the most important skills when it comes to evaluating the performance of the child. He framed it by saying:

> Nazmin was in Head Start program before coming here and we closed it, but it was not good idea, because I don't know if this is a pre-school or playschool. I don't know the name. I mean, it has to be something academic. Because if it's only playing, it will not help kids grow academically. If you want your child know their ABCs, keep them at Head Start. They should mention it here clearly, that this is not a preschool this a playschool. I don't know where is the line between play and cognitive skills. I would say it should be at least 30% academic, this way would be better for children. And compared to traditional school, what is the scientific evidence for it? It's not my field, but my field is science and statistics, so if somebody really wants to show me like, it should be something based on like in thirty year, there is 50, 60, 80% more probability that these children will be more professional or better human beings or something. I mean, I'm satisfied with what the school is doing in some way, but not its academic part. (Amir Individual Interview, December 2, 2019)

Likewise, Li Min, a mother from China, shared the same concern wondering if children spend a lot of time playing at the preschool age will they fall behind their peers in China when they enter elementary or secondary school. This question causes Chinese parents a lot of anxiety and pushes them to take more responsibility to invest in their children's after-school time. This is what Li Min had to say:

> I talked with Iris's mother (another Chinese family at the EEC), we all have concerns. I like when they play here at the EEC, but if they don't do academics they will be much,

> much behind Chinese kids, when they are in elementary school or in secondary school. I just read the news, like in a Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test, the four city of China like the kids from the four Chinese cities, they all ranked top one of the math, reading, writing, and science piece. That's kind of an international academic tests on academic skills around the globe. So I mean for this age, preschool, pre-K, I'm okay, but when they go to the elementary level, I think that is the kind of anxiety for parents. You know, this competition thing, I would definitely, need to train my kid Chinese and English and maybe math and more subjects. I am honestly not sure if play helps them learning those skills. Look how in China parents take their kids to different programs. We already kind of have a lot of anxieties and need to makeup or do a lot of tutoring after school. (Li Min, Focus Group Discussion, December 10, 2019)[1]

The group of parents who did not see a connection between play and learning also shared that while their children are in preschool, it is fine to let them play as much as they want, but once they enter elementary school, the real learning starts and the time to play needs to be decreased. Li Na, a mother from China, attested that:

> I think for me, at this age it is fine to let Aleo play as much as he wants, but when they getting older in elementary school than you know, they have to stay focus on school subjects. So I think maybe we need to decrease the time for a play so they can learn something. At this age I am not sure if they learn from playing. (Li Na, Focus Group Discussion, January 20, 2020)

[1]The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a study of 15-year-old students' performance in reading, mathematics, and science literacy, which is conducted every 3 years. https://www.oecd.org/pisa/

In contrast, the group of parents who supported the idea of play versus learning was highly satisfied with the EEC curriculum, highlighting the importance of play at the preschool age and its significant contributions to early learning and development. For example, Liu Yang, a mother from China, stated that learning happens through different ways, including play. As a mathematician, she placed a high value on learning math through play and emphasized how play makes learning math easy and fun for children. She said:

> Actually we learn through a lot of different ways. We play and we learn. Like we play puzzles and many other games. The topic of play is very important for children at this age. The final purpose of a play is to learn. Teaching math through play makes it very easy to understand and they have lots of fun while learning and playing math games. We play a lot of math games at home every day with William, and he enjoys it a lot. I think math is a good way to, how do I say that, to know the world better. I think the final purpose of play is to learn and I am so happy they play a lot here at the EEC. (Liu Yang, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Similarly, Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, attested to the fact that play and learning are interconnected. However, the challenge is how to create an environment that promotes play and how to make children like what they are learning and keeping their interests alive. He said:

> I think playing and learning are both interconnected. The challenge is making learning playing. Have the kids like what they're learning, you know, from three years until five, all they need to play. But if we want them to learn through play, we need to make that environment at school or at home. For example, Maryam is very active child and it is very hard to keep her engaged in one thing, because of that I turned everything in my house to a games and try to do something different every time. We play a lot together and

> I also let her play alone with no instructions. I think it also helps her learn a lot. (Mustafa, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Maria, a mother from Mexico with a deep understanding about constructivist teaching and learning and curriculum that promotes play, which she gained as a result of her living experiences in the U.S., highly supported the idea of how play is essential to the development of children. She emphasized several times during both interviews that play is required for healthy development of children. She said play influences and enhances the cognitive, physical, social, and emotional well-being of children. Maria shared her thoughts on the importance of play in the early years:

> For me play is very important and I would support it, you know, as much as possible because they have the whole rest of their lives to do academics. They're only kids once. And I think there's a lot of skills that they learn through playing. You know, there's your IQ, your intelligence, but there's also your emotional intelligence, things like empathy, social skills, and communication that are not learned sitting down with a book. And those are the skills that make you more successful. (Maria, Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

In fact, all interviewed parents, despite their diverse perspectives on play, had a very clear understanding of how play is an essential and critical component of a child's development (Allee-Herndon, Roberts, Hu, Clark, & Stewart, 2021; Vygotsky, 1978; White, 2013). While some parents had only surface level understanding and viewed play as a joyful activity, others had a very clear picture of the meaning behind play and why it is required for a healthy child's development. In addition, the parents' views were also influenced by their own cultural and educational backgrounds (Morales-Alexander, 2020). Since the parents' experiences with

teaching and learning never resembled an independent, unsupervised class environment where teachers have a dialogue with students, encourage independent learning and exploration, as well as help students construct their own knowledge, it is unrealistic to expect the parents to embrace the new (constructivist) meaning behind play. As one of the study participants, Amir, stated several times during the interview, "It is very hard to unlearn what you already have learned in your life" (Amir Individual Interview, December 2, 2019). This is clear evidence that these parents need more support to enhance their understanding of their children's new educational reality. However, it is imperative for schools like the EEC to help these parents to build on what they already know and construct their own new knowledge and understanding about play, including its deep connection to learning during the early years of child development (Allee-Herndon et al., 2021; White, 2013).

Parents' Desire to Raise Their Children Bilingual and Bicultural

It was evident from the "Language and Culture" section presented earlier in the chapter that all thirteen study participants place a high value on maintaining their home culture and language. One of the most apparent reasons for their desire for home language maintenance is to share their cultural traditions with their children and to keep communication with relatives from back home (Babaee, 2013; Chen, 2010; Lee, 2013).

In addition to maintaining the heritage language and culture, my study participants want their young children to master the English language and adhere to the cultural norms of their host country, which is the U.S. in this context (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). However, by doing so parents encounter many challenges and have many questions (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015). Therefore, during both interviews I asked a follow-up question: How can school support these families in their journey to raise bi/multilingual and bi/multicultural children? This question

sparked a spirited discussion. At first, parents said they could not imagine anything the school could do and that they considered the task mainly as one performed at home and the responsibility of parents. However, as the discussion evolved, many strategies were revealed and shared during both interviews.

For example, Maria, a mother from Mexico, said she thought that raising her children bilingual and bicultural (in her case Spanish/English) was solely a home task; however, it would be very helpful if the school could help the parents. One of the ways a school can share the task is by acknowledging the home languages of students attending the school. One strategy is to label things in the classroom in the different home languages international children. This will help all children be aware of the different languages international children speak at home. For international families, it sends the message that the school values and respects their language and culture. Maria stated:

> I think the initial thought is that it's a home task, but it would be very nice if it was a shared task. And I think one way to do that would be to maybe label things in the classroom in all different languages so that other kids are aware of, or maybe, I don't know who speaks this language, but I know it's here in my classroom, you know? I think it helps both. All children become aware of different languages their peers speak at home, and for us and our kids it is a representation of respect and value to our language and culture. And to your question, I think as parents, sometimes we are like horses with blinders and we just see our goal and what's in front of us, and we don't realize all of the support that is around us. And I think for me culturally, the school you send your students to learn, you help the school, but it is harder to think about how does this school help me?

> You know, it's always more about how do I help the school so thank you for asking that question? (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Similarly, Zhan Wei, a father from China, stated that if the school included the home languages and cultural backgrounds of all children and families, they will see and feel that they are natural and important parts of classroom activities. It will help young children gain confidence in building their Chinese identity and may address the "shyness" of being Chinese or speaking Chinese in school or other public places. Moreover, it helps children understand that the English language is not the only language used in an educational setting. However, if they only see English at school and Chinese at home, inevitably, these are the spaces where the children feel open to use those particular languages. Zhan Wei, a father from China, stated:

> If school can support us in this regard, we would highly appreciate that. I think when children see their language in school it gives them confidence and they don't feel shy to be Chinese. It also allows them to have an idea that English is not the only language that are being used in the professional environment. Another worry is that speaking a different language is not a bad thing or an embarrassing thing, plus my child's home language is his identity as a Chinese student. (Zhan Wei Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Asking for specific strategies, the same participant was very clear about helping teachers develop a deeper understanding about working with young bilingual and bicultural children. In addition, Zhan Wei pointed to the importance of providing Chinese reading materials in classes. He said:

> I think teachers should take some time to understand this bilingual case, how children learn a second language and then understand it may take longer time for these kids to get used to the new school environment, so teachers need to be patient with these kids, this is one thing. And another thing is to expose children to the Chinese characters and books.

> Cause right now the EEC is only focusing on English reading materials but we if want our children to become bilingual, is it possible to have some Chinese characters or Chinese books in school. (Zhan Wei Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

In addition, ten out of thirteen parents expressed desire to have a small language class in their children's preschool. Namely, these groups of parents did not expect an official Chinese, Arabic, etc., language class with a professional teacher, but rather a small group activity with a native speaker to provide an opportunity for children to see their language and culture represented at school. The activity could be open to all children if they wish to take part in and learn about their peers' home country. For example, Mustafa, a father from Saudi Arabia, suggested:

> If school doing some kind of survey and knowing how many students are from each country. Let's say, for example we have five students from her country and five from mine and 10 from China and 4 from Russia. Let's say the requirement is three to five students in each group. Parents from the same country would give one hour every week to come to school and work with these children in a small group teaching language, play games in that language, sing a song, etc. Or sometime make any cultural presentation with the whole class like cooking food, showing traditional clothes or something like that. And other children can take part too. I know it's difficult for school to have time for this, but it will help a lot our kids to see their language and culture represented in school. It's not easy to find teachers and it's costly, but this is something I'm thinking of. (Mustafa Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Li Na, a mother from China, supported the same idea that the best way to maintain the home language is to keep using that language at home. However, if children are exposed to that language at school, it will double the effort and boost their cultural identity as a Chinese among

American peers. A short language class can support that endeavor. Li Na, a mother from China, shared her thoughts:

> I just think keep talking with kids at home in our home language is mostly important part for our kids to be a bilingual in United States. But it would be so helpful if school can have like a language class or cultures learning environment or something like this. I think it will be better because the kids spend a lot of time at school among their American friends and sometime they feel shy cause maybe their English is not good or they look different, something like that. So if school can have like the language class or like the parents sharing their own country's traditional holidays or one of the festival like we did in Room 6, and let other children know more about where Aleo is coming from, it will help his confidence and he feels more comfortable in his Chinese identity. (Li Na Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Apart from this, nine parents wanted their children's preschool to hire a more diversified teaching staff in order to expose the school's teaching personnel, as well as the children themselves, to diversity. Liu Wang was one of the parents who shared her child's excitement when he found out that one of his teachers spoke Chinese and another one came from a different country and spoke four languages. Liu Wang explained:

> I remember there is one semester William told me that Mom I have a teacher who can speak Chinese. I think this is perfect for the kids who cannot speak English very well. So they can see, oh, there is some teacher can help us to understand better. Maybe school can have some diversified staff. Like Mrs. Leila, they can see the diversity, and he told me Mrs. Leila can speak four different languages. He was so impressed, right? (Liu Wang, Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

The idea of conducting "show and tell," a short performance where children including American students can present anything related to their home culture, was supported by participants from Albania, Mexico, India, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. Maria, a mother from Mexico, elaborated on how important it is for children to showcase their culture in school as it helps them connect school and home. As children begin to see a clear boundary between their American/English spoken only in school and Chinese or Spanish spoken at home, they resist opportunities to open up their home language in school or in other places. Therefore, this activity could help bridge that gap. Maria shared about her older child's experience with "show and tell" in her school:

> The school that my other child went to, they used to have "show and tell" at every Friday. And so maybe a cultural "show and tell" where the expectation is something cultural, even if they're American students to show, you know, the other students what is American culture, but then also what is Mexican or Chinese, culture. I think it's really important for the students to be comfortable with their own cultures because I think they're very good about saying this is "home" and this is "school". (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

The revelation that children felt shy or hesitant to speak their home language with their parents in public was echoed by all thirteen study participants. They expressed concern and could not understand why their children were hesitant to use their home language outside of their homes. Parents believed that if the school supported children in using their home languages and accepted their own cultural identities in a school setting, it would help these children feel more comfortable speaking their home languages in other places. Therefore, parents viewed school as a support in this regard, despite their belief that it might not be possible in the U.S. context

because English is the only prevalent language of the country. Wang Li, a mother from China, said:

> That's a scary thing because from childhood our kids abandon their own nature or abandon their mother language because of the nature of the environment. Because I mean this is America. English is the official language for America, for the U.S. and that is normal here, but for us parents it is just so important to keep their nature or keep their mother language so they are not being shame or being afraid of speaking. I know that maybe not possible here in school but that is something I think will help us a lot and our kids. (Wang Li Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

Maria acknowledged the same idea and shared that international parents feel lonely in their journey to raise their children bilingual and bicultural in a monolingual American/English environment. Once children reject their home language and culture, parents feel stuck about what to do next. However, if children see their language and culture represented and embraced by their school and their peers, it might help children tremendously to stay connected to that culture. Maria said:

> I think when your child rejects your culture, then it's very lonely because you don't have any other, anybody else to support you or to tell them, oh no, it's okay. Or no, this is really cool. You know, it's really up to you then you're not cool. So I think that's difficult when your own child rejects your own culture, then you almost feel like, okay, now what? Right? But if children see at least some representation of their own culture and language at school with their friends, I think that will help a lot to stay connected. (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020)

Undoubtedly, these comments were more of a dream yet to come true for my study participants. Reaching the goal of bringing bilingualism/biculturalism to American mainstream is still a long-awaited dream. Therefore, parents are clear that their roles and responsibility at home include serving as their child's teacher to teach and maintain the home language and culture. Despite their busy schedules, all parents in the study showed a high commitment to provide additional support to their children for heritage language and culture maintenance at home. This is how Zhan Wei, a father from China, expressed his thoughts:

> To be honest, it takes too much time. And you know, we are international parents and the way, if we want our kids to speak both languages, we need to teach our kids at home. So which means we spend much more time to teach our kids than the other parents. So actually every night at home they are very busy until another school starts at home. We do like an activity about math and I have reading time in Chinese and English, then we have phonic time again for Chinese and English, and that's every day. (Zhan Wei Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

It is clear from the data that all study participants tried very hard and even had their own "home school policy" in regards to teaching and keeping their heritage culture and language alive in their host country (Babaee, 2013; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015). However, they all shared concerns that maintenance of the home language is a challenge for parents raising bilingual children in a monolingual society where their language is a minority language (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Tobin, 2016).

In addition, parents feared that if their children lose the heritage language and reject their home culture, it will negatively impact them as they grow up. In particular, the loss of the home language will lead to loosing ties with relatives from back home, rejection from their ethnic

community (Budiyana, 2017; Sánchez-Muñoz, 2016) identity crisis, and diminish their children's cultural awareness and knowledge (Law, 2015).

On the other hand, all study participants supported the idea that if their children master their home language while growing up, it will have a positive impact on their cognitive, intellectual, and identity development (Choi, Lee, & Oh, 2018; Jia, Chen, Kim, Chan, & Jeung, 2014). Therefore, if the task to raise and educate bilingual and bicultural children is shared with the school and local community, it will help both international families and their children feel connected to their own roots and also provide American community members with an opportunity to learn about other cultures, languages, and ways of thinking. Ultimately, this is a positive win for both groups (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015).

Summary

This section provides a vivid demonstration of the main barriers that my study participants faced as they fostered direct involvement in the academic lives of their children. It is evident from previous studies that many barriers impede parents' ability to be involved (Al-Dababneh, 2018; Homby & Blackwell, 2018; Jafarov, 2015) and that parental involvement plays a crucial role in children's education (Jafarov, 2015). However, lack of parental involvement has a negative impact on student's academic achievement and can be affected by factors ranging from socioeconomic status to linguistic limitations and the like (Jafarov, 2015; Homby & Blackwell, 2018).

As it is evident from the data presented in this section, the main challenges faced by these particular parents were connected to the sociocultural factors, as well as differences in educational background. The study participants, despite having high socioeconomic status and good command of English language, still found it hard to connect with their children's school.

Specifically, issues for these parents include understanding and following the expectations, including knowing the rules and regulations their child's preschool follows, comprehending the true meaning behind the inquiry-oriented, play-based curriculum, as well as openly communicating with the school their wishes and concerns on the matters that are highly important for them, including support in raising their children bilingual and bicultural in a monolingual society. One of the main underlying causes behind these barriers is the lack of information between schools and families about how to establish relationships and work together (Al-Dababneh, 2018). It is crucial for schools and teachers to involve families in ways that are truly reciprocal. Both schools and families can benefit from shared resources and information. When schools invite parents to share their knowledge and skills, teachers can integrate this information into their curriculum and teaching practices. When a mutual exchange of respect and information between the school and families is established, it will help eliminate many of the barriers revealed in this study.

Cross Case Analysis

The third research question for this study was: What are the cross-cultural similarities and differences amongst international families in regard to parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs? The study participants interviewed in this case study represent countries like China, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Albania. The previous section summarized the four main themes found in each case. Conducting the cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) for multiple case studies, I considered these four themes for each group and determined the similarities and differences they have in regard to parental involvement practices and child rearing beliefs.

Similarities and Differences: Overarching Themes

When reviewing the data, there were several overarching themes that appeared. This section will break down the four main themes: parental involvement practices, ways to be involved at school, adjusting to the new educational curriculum for their young children, and raising bicultural and bilingual children. The participants of each ethnic group approached the notion of their involvement in the education of their young children and child rearing beliefs based on their own priorities and experiences. While the main ideas found in each case have many similarities, their differing perceptions and understandings revealed the uniqueness of each participant's perspective.

Parental Involvement Practices Used at Home, School, and Community

In considering this theme from each of the participants (cases) in this case study, I looked for similarities and differences across all thirteen cases. This analysis conducted across all cases indicates what parental involvement means for the participants in this study. All thirteen participants shared a similar perspective on seeing their role as their child's first teacher and being responsible for, as one of the study participants shared, "what we are supposed to do" (Wang Li Individual Interview, November 8, 2019), as a parent i.e., support the holistic (physical, social, emotional, and cognitive/academic) development of their young children.

In the majority of responses, involvement practices were described by participants as preparing food, dropping off and picking up children from preschool, playing games, reading books, teaching letters and numbers, communicating with school, passing on home language and culture to their children, and taking part in various educational and entertaining events in community and in school. However, the ways these activities were chosen, conducted, or taken part in were solely based on the educational and cultural background (Antony-Newman, 2020;

Jafarov, 2015; Morales-Alexander, 2020) of each participant. For example, Zhan Wei and Liu Yang, a father and mother from China having math backgrounds, purposefully chose activities to enhance their children's math skills. Describing one of the math activities, Zhan Wei stated, "Lego is the primary education tool we are using as something specific to teach Alex about math at home. That's what I mostly do with Alex cause I am math Professor" (Zhan Wei Individual Interview, November 1, 2019). Similarly, Liu Yang stated, "Me and my husband are both busy doctorate students, we like reading a lot and we major in math, so we like numbers. And, yes we teach William how to count every single day" (Liu Yang Individual Interview, November 8, 2019).

While one of the factors that these similarities can be attributed to is the educational background of the study participants, the other factor is the cultural background that can also have an impact on promoting math skills in the early years. Namely, five out of six Chinese parents expressed using math practices daily at home to support the early math skills development of their preschoolers.

The manifestation of math involvement is based on Chinese cultural ideologies about parental responsibility and learning. Traditionally, Chinese parents view it as their responsibility to teach their children at home (Chao, 2000) and particularly, they are more involved in early math education in comparison to American parents (Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Wang et al., 2012; Li, 2012). In addition, Chinese parenting is deeply rooted in the Confucian idea that the first step of an individual development is the acquisition of knowledge (Li, 2005). Therefore, consistent with these cultural notions, Chinese parents view themselves as the primary teachers for their young children, taking responsibility for the early education with the high emphasis on academic skills including math and language (Luo et al., 2013; Sun & Moreno, 2020).

Likewise, participants from other ethnic group like Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, India, Albania, and Mexico shared the same cultural notions in regards to parental involvement at home. Even though they did not express huge emphasis on early math development as shared by Chinese parents, the academic development at preschool age was still very important for this group of parents as well. As in Chinese parents' cases, the choices of parental involvement practices of these parents were also based on their prior experiences with education from their home countries. For example, Amir, a father from Pakistan, stated, "I know mother education is the most important. And where I am now is because of my mother. She taught me to write and everything. My father supported financially, but it is mainly my mother who helped me with my education" (Amir Individual Interview, December 2, 2019). Similarly, Lakshmi from India said:

> There's lots of differences in the culture and education between the U.S and India. In India, we don't send kids to preschools. They don't want to send them to the preschools because if we have grandparents to look after them. Here we don't have anybody unfortunately to look after them. So we have to put them in preschool. But when they are in school parents usually don't go to schools unless there is any problem with your child, parents help children to learn at home (Lakshmi Individual Interview, February 7, 2020).

This quote from Lakshmi echoes the evidence that was shared by other twelve study participants as well. Specifically, the parents stated that they did not expect to come to school unless there was a behavior or educational issue with their child. Despite being active agents in their children's education and rearing at home**,** these participants could not visualize any role they might play in their children's education at school. Because of their own experiences and educational backgrounds, it is challenging for these parents to accept any new roles at their children's school. However, all study participants expressed desire to be involved and are

seeking for ways to be part of their young children's preschool in the U.S. (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Morales-Alexander, 2020; Tobin et al., 2013, 2016).

Parents Seeking Ways to Be Involved at School

The perspectives of study participants across all the cases on the ways to be involved in their children's school activities were quite similar despite their cultural differences. Eleven out of thirteen participants who were new to the school system shared a keen desire to learn and find ways to be involved in their children's school activities. Two participants who lived in the country for many years and have experience working in the education setting in the U.S. were quite familiar with the involvement practices, thereby sharing their stories of going through the same process with other participants.

The new parents were actively involved in those activities at school which were familiar to them. For example, parent teacher conference was familiar because it was part of their prior life and educational experiences, and thus well attended and embraced by study participants. Nora, a mother from Albania, shared her experience attending school activities:

> I just come to the parent teacher conference cause that is something I know they do in Albania too. I like how they do it here, one on one with the teacher. I asked Ms. Shane a lot of question during the meeting. I also attended parent connection one time but I really did not understand the meeting. This is all I think. I don't know what other activities I can help at school. (Nora Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

The same was true with other participants as well, except for two parents who gained experience living in the U.S., understanding and making meaning of the parental involvement expectations. Li Jing, a mother from China stated, "Because I was a teacher in public school here in the U.S., I know what they expect from parents, but I understand it is hard for the new comers

as nobody here actually explains you what to do" (Li Jing Individual Interview, December 2, 2019). Similarly, Maria, a mother of three children from Mexico whose children attended the same Early Education Center, attested to the fact that it takes time for parents to become familiar with the new norms as international parents. It would be very helpful if the school took some time to build relationships with new parents and help them understand what parental involvement means in the U.S. schools. Maria said:

> I understand it takes time for new parents to get to know how school works here. I think sometimes, you know, school personnel assumes that the settings are different, that the expectations are different. And so when they're communicating with the parents, there's no period of teaching or saying, do you know what school is like here? Or do you have any questions about your child's day or why we're doing this? It's just let me tell you what's going on without taking the time to ask questions and listen. How is it in your home country and let's, you know, observe if it's any different to see where, you know, we might be missing information. I think it will help a lot if school builds good relationships with each family to better to know their situation. (Maria Individual Interview, November 16, 2019)

These quotes are a true evidence that there is not an open dialogue between school and parents. Studies have shown that educators play a critical role in helping parents understand how school works as well as how parents can support their children more productively (Epstein, 2011; Jeynes, 2012). Creating relationships that are informative, collaborative, and based on collective trust and respect (Deslandes, Barma, & Morin, 2015) is vital, especially with parents who don't share the dominant cultural and educational background (Isik-Ercan, 2018; Tobin et al., 2013, 2016). Based on these findings, it is clear that the main obstacle to international

relocatee parental involvement is the lack of information between parents and schools on how to establish trusting relationships and work together (Al-Dababneh, 2018; Jafarov, 2015; Magwa & Mugari, 2017). Even though schools work hard and try their best to accommodate the needs of their international relocatee parents and their children**,** the differences in communication styles across cultures pose challenges to the ways in which schools communicate their messages.

International relocatee parents coming from traditional authoritarian societies share "high context" (HC) communication style (Hall, 2000), where the intimate human relationships and the well-structured social norms serve as a broad context in which human communication takes place. This is in contrast with the Western Eurocentric "low context" (LC) communication style (Hall, 2000) that relies on explicit and straightforward communication, mainly written and nonpersonal (Kim, Pan, & Park, 1998). In addition, communication in "high context" (Hall, 2000) cultures mainly occurs through the spoken word or "word of mouth," otherwise known as "oral cultures".

Conversely, in Western countries like the U.S., communication is presented through the processes of reading and writing, mainly referred to as "written cultures" (Chamberlin, 2003). Thus, for parents who are new to the school system, heavy written text in a new language sent home from their children's school is another barrier that adds to other complexities parents face during their involvement endeavors. Therefore, until the cross-cultural communication barriers are addressed, both schools and their new counterparts will struggle to lay the groundwork for building trusting partnerships with each other to work collaboratively for the benefit of international children who have the potential to become the future generation of the U.S. (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015).

Parents' Initial Dissatisfaction with The Inquiry-Based, Play Oriented Curriculum

The cross-case analysis demonstrated that ten parents out of thirteen who were unfamiliar with the inquiry-based, play oriented curriculum expressed dissatisfaction with the outcomes of the curriculum in comparison to three participants who were quite familiar with the constructivist teaching and learning approach. These parents' satisfaction with the curriculum is based on the experiences gained as a result of working in education settings in the U.S., having prior experiences with their children's schools, and being willing to learn and better understand the meaning behind the inquiry-based, play oriented curriculum.

For example, Nora, a mother from Albania, followed her education and cultural notions as an Albanian and believed in the importance of teaching her child reading and writing as early as possible. However, living in the U.S, getting a better understanding about her child's early learning and development from her child's school, and constantly talking with her child's teacher about the curriculum, she started to question her own understanding and changed her perspective to what is best for her child at this age. Nora said:

> Before Emerson was not born, I talked with other parents and what I had in my mind that when I have a kid I will teach her how to write and read very fast. But now I don't think this is the most important thing. I see how they do it at school here differently. I talk a lot with her teacher. Sometime I force her to read, or to learn the letters but if she doesn't want to read the book and do something else instead, it's more important for me now. I learned from her teacher that if she likes it and feels comfortable then she learns best, but if she's not comfortable then I don't think it really works. (Nora Individual Interview, November 18, 2019)

Similarly, Maria, a mother from Mexico, shared her experience being educated in a traditional teaching and learning setting and how her perspective shifted upon her exposure to a new constructivist teaching and learning environment in the U.S. Maria said:

> I went to school in Mexico all the way up to sixth grade, so I remember there was very traditional in the sense that you came to school to learn. You've sat in your seat, the teacher had the power, the teacher was knowledgeable, and you had recess and that was it. And we did use to have extracurricular kind of classes like, dance, gym. I went to a school that had English two hours a day, every day. And so, you know, there were other opportunities, but in terms of the environment and the attitudes towards learning, it was the teacher who guided everything. But here is the complete opposite to what I described therefore it is hard to understand how learning happens in this environment unless you learn how it works. (Maria Individual Interview, November 16, 2019)

Further, describing the benefit of play and inquiry-oriented teaching, Maria was very clear how this approach contributes to early learning and development of children stating "I think there's a lot of skills that they learn through playing. You know, there's your IQ, your intelligence, but there's also your emotional intelligence, things like empathy, social skills, and communication that are not learned sitting down with a book" (Maria Focus Group Interview, January 20, 2020).

In contrast, those parents who were unacquainted with the new teaching and learning approach questioned the rigor of the curriculum, underestimating its contribution to cognitive and academic development (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). While parents were quite happy with their children's physical, social, and emotional development, they were not quite satisfied with their children's academic development. This belief is attributed to the fact that parents did not see the type of teaching and learning environment they were accustomed to in

their home countries, as described earlier by Maria. The new classroom setting seemed like an open space and teachers seemed like "it's not a teacher, it is a friend" (Liu Yang, Individual Interview, November 5, 2019) type of situation, where not much learning could occur.

A father from Pakistan, Amir**,** stating his disappointment with his child's preschool**,** believed that the school his child attended earlier promoted better academic development in comparison to the Early Education Center, where play is the focus of learning. He said, "If you want your child know their ABCs, keep them at Head Start. They should mention it here (Early Education Center) clearly, that this is not a pre-school this a play-school. I don't know where is the line between play and cognitive skills" (Amir, Individual Interview, December 2, 2019).

The same belief was true for all ten participants who were new to the school system. Since all study participants shared a traditional teaching and learning background, confronting the new constructivist style of teaching and learning posed a lot of questions and misunderstanding. In other words, parents, not seeing the structured teaching nor understanding how the new setting is focused on broadening children's learning opportunities according to their interests and needs (Keung & Cheung, 2019), were puzzled if their children's early education is academically strong enough. However, parents who gained a better understanding about their child's new curriculum as a result of time spent in the U.S. were more in favor of their children's learning outcomes.

The cross-case analysis attested to the fact that once again the participants' prior educational and lived experiences as well as cultural backgrounds influenced their understanding of the situation. Specifically, all my study participants share a high level of what is called power distance cultural dimension. Power distance is the degree to which members of society expect and accept an uneven distribution of authority, resources, and privileges (Hofstede, 1981).

Therefore, my study participants remain compliant, obey the rules, and do not question the authority's role, which includes schools and teachers (Kim, Pan & Park, 1998).

Despite their dissatisfaction with their children's preschool curriculum, parents remain silent and do not question the teachers or the school administrators on "why the children are doing what they are doing in their preschool classes". Instead, parents accept what school has to offer and created another school at home where they try to meet the academic goals they set for their young children. Presumably, parents see academic progress as the main indicator for the future successful career life for their children. Therefore, academic development as well as the fear of not being academically developed from early years was a milestone parents tried to accomplish in their host country (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021).

Parents' Desire to Raise Their Children Bilingual and Bicultural

The cross-case analysis of this theme did not reveal much difference; rather, the analysis revealed similarities across all cases represented in the study. All thirteen study participants expressed an enormous desire to maintain and transmit their heritage language, cultural traditions, and ethnic identities to their young children, or otherwise they thought it is bound to be lost (Fishman, 2001) as their children are growing up in a different cultural and language setting.

At the same time, being aware of the mainstream school expectations, parents deliberately helped their young children to enhance their English language skills and understanding of the host country cultural norms (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). For example, Wang Li, a mother from China, emphasized that it not only language that is important to learn at this age for her child, but understanding and behaving according to mainstream cultural norms is also crucial. Wang Li said:

> I think learning English language is very critical. But, I try to teach her manners, or some habits and words in like being polite in English. Because, I realize, how cultural differences is not just about the language, but also how people think, how they communicate, and how they interact with each other. (Wang Li Individual Interview, November 5, 2019)

Besides, all study participants had a clear understanding that in the absence of institutional support for international home language education, it is only the ethnic community organizations and familial support that play crucial role in the maintenance of home language (Morales-Alexander, 2020). Therefore, all parents relied only on their own efforts and the offerings of ethnic community support groups, such as Sunday schools where children could learn and socialize with children from the same ethnic groups. Haifa, a mother of three children from Saudi Arabia, noted the vital role home language and culture play in sustaining the ties between her children and her extended family members back in Saudi Arabia, as well as their ethnic identity. However, having good command of English language and adopting new cultural norms of the mainstream society carried the same importance in order for her children to be successful in the American school. Haifa said:

> At home me and my husband try using both English and Arabic. I'm trying to force the Arabic as I want my children to be able to communicate with family back in Saudi Arabia and stay connected to the culture. Sometimes I get frustrated because they don't understand so I change to English. It is easier to communicate but it is better to speak in Arabic so I'm trying. I know there is Sunday school we go sometime where my kids socialize with other kids from Saudi Arabia and that is very helpful. I also understand that they need to have a good English so they can succeed in school here but I am afraid they

> will lose Arabic language or identify with Arabic culture as they grow older here in the U.S. (Haifa Individual Interview, November 14, 2019)

While all study participants attested to the idea of raising their children speaking home and English languages and following home and adopting to the host cultural norms, they feared their children will lose interest in maintaining home language as they grow up. These findings are in line with the previous research that states when children start to socialize outside of their family, they bring the mainstream language home (Spolsky & Shohamy, 2000) and resist the language practices of their parents (Caldas & Caron-Caldas, 2002; Fogle, 2013; Kayam & Hirsch, 2012; Kopeliovich, 2010, 2013; Palviainen & Boyd, 2013). Moreover, despite the parents' efforts to foster bilingualism, children tend to choose the language of mainstream society as they grow up (Caldas & Caron-Caldas, 2002).

On the basis of the findings of this study, it is evident that it is not easy for international parents to decide what is best for their children as there are expectations of mainstream society as well as their own home language and culture that need to be considered. While children mastering English language skills might not be a challenge, maintaining the home language and culture can be complicated (Curdt-Christiansen, 2013). Preserving home language and culture is crucial for the children's future education, as their stay in the U.S. is not certain due to their parents' immigration status or employment perspectives. Next, it is the representation of their home cultural identities and values (Bezcioglu-Goktolga & Yagmur, 2018). Lastly, in order to help their young children navigate their different social and cultural environments, parents are frequently forced to find a balance between their understanding of what is best for their children and the realities of their new home where there is limited space to grow bilingual and bicultural children.

Summary

According to Philips (2019), educators constantly underscore that parents are considered the child's first teacher and their most excellent resource for early education and development prior to the official school setting. The purpose of this study was to explore the perspectives of international relocatee parents about the parental involvement practices used to support the early learning and development of their young children. This chapter contained the results and findings from the qualitative thematic analysis of the face-to-face and focus group interview data.

While this study focused on a small sample representing a large population, the findings contributed to an in-depth understanding of various practices international relocatee parents utilized to support the early learning and development of their young children at home, in school, and in local community. The next chapter will show how the findings answered the three research questions, their relation to previous scholarships, and the theoretical framework that guided the study. Highlighting the implications and limitations for the study, the next chapter will conclude the dissertation with suggestions for future research and concluding thoughts.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

This chapter begins with an overview of the study followed by a discussion of the findings. The discussion describes how the findings answered the study's three research questions in connection to the previous scholarship and theoretical framework. The chapter closes with implications, recommendations, suggestions for further research, and the conclusion.

Overview of the Study

This multi-case study focused on the perspectives and understandings of international relocatee (Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021) parents in regards to their involvement practices utilized to support the early learning and development of their young children. To situate my study, I conducted a review of the literature that addressed the various avenues international relocatee parents use to get involved in their children's education. In doing this research, I found out that it is not possible to arrive at one single definition of parent involvement (Alvarez-Valdivia et al., 2012; Fan & Chen, 2001; Lau, Li, & Rao, 2012; Shen, et al., 2014; Yoder & Lopez, 2013).

Much of the literature on parental involvement in a child's education illustrates that international relocatee parents lack involvement and are not interested in their children's education (Andrews, 2013; Amigo, 2016; Beauregard, Petrakos, & Dupont, 2014). Other studies found that international parents are involved and interested in their children's education, but not in the ways that may be recognized in mainstream U.S. schools (Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2018; Lin & Lash, 2014; Li, 2012; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Morales-Alexander, 2020).

In order to better understand the complexity of this phenomenon and explore more deeply where my study participants belong in this spectrum, I conducted a multi-case study. The study addressed the following research questions:

- In what ways are international relocatee parents involved in their young children's early learning and development?
- What are the parental involvement practices identified by the international relocatee parents and why do they deem these important to the early learning and development of their young children?
- What are the cross-cultural similarities and differences amongst international relocatee parents in regard to parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs?

Thirteen international relocatee parents representing different countries, such as China, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Mexico, and Albania, were interviewed for this study using face-to-face, open-ended, semi-structured interviews. In addition, ten out of thirteen participants took part in focus group interviews, which included five members in each focus group. Participants were purposefully chosen for this study (Maxwell, 2013). A midwestern public university's Early Education Center served as a site for this study. The site consisted of a diverse population including more than 25 percent of the international relocatee parents. The participants were initially contacted via email. Upon signing the consent form, all thirteen participants agreed to take part in the face-to face individual and focus group interviews. I drew on my experience as an international parent to invite them to be a part of my study and this enabled me to build strong rapport (Rubin & Rubin, 2012) with all of the participants.

Data analysis was an ongoing process throughout the study and was aligned with

the data collection process. All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed. Typed transcripts of individual and focus group interviews were analyzed using constant comparative methods (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and inductive analysis (Hatch, 2002) to identify patterns, categories, and themes. Each participant was viewed as a single case in the study. After each case was analyzed separately as a unit, a parallel cross-case analysis (Stake, 2006) was conducted to identify differences and commonalities amongst the study participants' perceptions. The data analysis revealed distinct themes for each case, as well as overarching themes for the entire study.

The findings of the study indicate that international relocatee parents were involved in their young children's early learning and development. The data revealed that the parental involvement practices study participants used to support the early learning and development of their young children consisted of several characteristics. First, they required a belief in doing what is best for their child at an early age. Second, they entailed the knowledge parents possessed on the activities that are developmentally appropriate and will help the child grow physically, social-emotionally, and cognitively. Lastly, the practices reflected the lived experiences plus cultural and educational background that shaped international relocatee parents' vision on the choice of practices they used to promote the holistic development of their children in their host country.

Moreover, as parents engaged with their children and their children's schools and communities, their cultural, educational, and life experiences expanded, creating an additive affect to their existing parental involvement frameworks. In the next section, I address the findings in connection to the previous research and theoretical framework used to support the interpretation of the data.

Discussion of the Findings

Due to organized data collection and thorough data analysis, I was able to identify key themes that responded to my three research questions. These themes include parental involvement practices used at home, school, and community; parents seeking ways to be involved at school; parents' initial dissatisfaction with the inquiry-based, play oriented curriculum; and parents' desire to raise their children to speak their home language and English as well as adhere to home country and U.S. cultural norms. In this section I address the findings and connect them to previous research and the sociocultural theoretical framework as defined by Rogoff (2003) and Moll et al., (2005) used to support the interpretation of the data.

The findings of the study indicate that the participants described their involvement practices in a variety of ways, both at home, in school, and in local community. While parents mostly see their role in the home as one of being involved in parenting and stimulating cognitive development of their young children, they also showed a high interest in attending school events they were familiar with and getting involved in community activities that helped in the development of certain skills or knowledge in their young children (Antony-Newman, 2020; Duran, Carruba-Rugel, & Solis 2020; Huntsinger & Jose, 2009; Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2018; Li, 2012; Morales-Alexander, 2016, 2020; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Tobin et al., 2013; Poza, Brooks, & Valdes, 2014).

The parental involvement practices used by study participants at home included dropping off and picking up children from school, running errands, cooking meals, watching television, reading books and playing together, as well as a high emphasis on developing the early literacy, numeracy, and language skills. Practices used in community, such as taking children out in the community to a swimming, dance, or skating class, attending various educational and cultural

events on and off the university campus, visiting the library or science center and attending Sunday School, as well as practices used in school like attending parent teacher conferences, communicating with teachers, and volunteering at the familiar events, are best described as the "routine practices of the household" (Moll et al., 2005, p. 13) and/or cultural "regularities" as stated by Rogoff (2003, p. 3).

Study participants use of these parental involvement practices at home, in school, and in community shows that these parents care immensely for their children's education and well-being. In addition, those study participants who were new to the school system expressed strong desire about searching and learning new ways to better support the overall development of their children in their host country, which aligns to previous studies (Antony-Newman, 2020; Duran, Carruba-Rugel & Solis, 2020; Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015). However, the current definitions of parental involvement are so narrowly characterized (Morales-Alexander, 2016; Isik-Ercan, 2018) that they too often disregard these "cultural regularities—the cultural ways in which people organize their lives" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 3) as being important to families in choosing their involvement practices for their children's learning and development.

While this study employed the sociocultural theoretical lens as defined by Rogoff (2003) and Moll et al. (2005) to better understand the motives behind international relocatee parents' involvement practices, it is vital to provide the definition of culture from both theorists, as all thirteen study participants relied on their cultural background to enact their parental involvement practices. According to Moll et al. (2005):

> Culture is not a material phenomenon; it does not consist of things, people, behavior or emotions. It is rather an organization of these things. It is the form of things that people

> have in mind, their models for perceiving, relating and otherwise interpreting them. (Moll et al., 2005, p. 33)

Rogoff (2003) views human development in itself as a cultural process and defines culture as "a routine ways of doing things in any community's approach to living… people develop as participants in cultural communities" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 3). Thus, both definitions are in congruence with why cultural background is one of the pillars parents relied on when choosing their parental involvement practices.

One of the findings that attests to the statement "people develop as participants in cultural communities" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 3) is that these parents placed a high value on raising "a good human being" versus teaching their young children the home cultural values, morals, traditions, ethnic identities, as well as home language skills (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015; Karchenko, 2020; Lee & Gupta, 2020). Study participants defined a good human being as one who has values and good morals like being respectful, obedient, empathetic, kind, and willing to help others. The ways parents were teaching these skills to their young children was mainly through modeling these traits at home (Morales-Alexander, 2016).

Speaking in very general terms, and recognizing that there are many differences between and within cultures, it could be stated very broadly that in many western cultures, the construct of school is academically and socially driven; the valued learning style is individualistic and student-centered. This is in contrast to the eastern learning style, which is collectivist with the strong influences on obedience, respect for elders, and conformity. Cultures are not uniform, and many educational systems include schools operated on a variety of educational philosophies. Distinctions exist between the dominant values of schools in many western cultures and the dominant values of schools in many traditional Asian cultures. The former is more focused on

individualism and the latter on collectivist values (Hofstede, 1981, 2001). These distinctions involve emphasis and dominance of a belief system rather than a dualistic separation.

Moreover, eastern educational philosophy views school not only as a place for intellectual development but as a space for interpersonal and moral growth, where teachers not only teach subject knowledge but instill good morals and support parents in their children's upbringing as well (Hassan, Jamaludin, Sulaiman & Baki, 2010; Smith & Hu, 2013). All study participants viewed the teacher's role in schooling as highly important in assisting their young children as they develop knowledge, skills, and good morals.

In addition, the idea of raising a modest child originated from a central Confucian principle—being modest, obedient, humble, and prioritizing group interests (Wu et al., 2002). Thus, the desire of the Chinese parents to raise respectful, obedient, and modest children has roots in this principle. Most of the parents also believed that if there is no respect between student and teacher, learning will not happen (Hassan, Jamaludin, Sulaiman & Baki, 2010; Smith & Hu, 2013). Therefore, seven participants from China, out of thirteen total participants, who had a strong belief in Confucian principle, followed the same beliefs about their child rearing practices. This belief is in line with Rogoff (2003) who stated, "people's performance depends in large part on the circumstances that are routine in their community and on the cultural practices they are used to …what they do depends in important ways on the cultural meaning given to the events…" (p. 6). The same is noted in the funds of knowledge concept that states, "practices do not emerge from nowhere; they are formed and transformed within sociohistorical circumstances" (Gonzalez, Moll & Amanti, 2005, p. 1).

Consequently, despite the fact that study participants were living in a different Western cultural context—some arrived recently while others have lived in the U.S. for a longer period of

time—they followed their own cultural and educational beliefs upon first enrolling their children in preschool. These practices were part of their socio-historical and socio-cultural circumstances that gave meaning to the parental involvement choices they made on a daily basis.

A newer perspective emanating from these study participants is their collective commitment to the practices necessary to raise a respectful, modest, and obedient child, who follows home cultural values and speaks the home language. This is a new finding different from the literature. This type of parental involvement has not been documented in the existing literature (Guo, 2012) and is not considered by teachers and valued by schools (Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2016). However, it was clear from the participants' responses to all three research questions that these parents are highly invested in the early education and development of their young children despite the challenges they face in their new homes.

In fact, the practices parents used to support the early learning and development of their young children were mainly based on their educational and cultural backgrounds, as well as the lived experiences that shaped their understanding of child education and development. It was evident in participants' responses that knowing how they were raised was vital in understanding their own child's education and upbringing. For example, phrases like "that's how my mother raised me," or "that's how it was in my childhood," "my mother education is the best," etc., were used frequently when study participants were sharing their experiences as parents. This belief is in line with Rogoff's (2003) statement about the sociocultural view of human development, which states "Human development necessarily builds on the historical endowment with which humans are born both as members of their species and as members of their communities" (p. 65). For this reason, knowledge of the cultural-historical development of my study participants provided the beliefs, value systems, understandings, and norms for thought processes and

behavior, which also laid the foundation for the ways in which they would raise their own children.

Thus, what this study makes visible and adds to the existing literature is that international parents can be involved parents without being physically present at their child's school. The active participation of these parents in their children's early learning and development outside of school represents the parental involvement framework in a broader context (Isik-Ercan, 2018; Morales-Alexander, 2020), which better supports the holistic approach parents can take to support the early education and development of their young children.

While this form of parental involvement does not correspond to the conventional definition of the framework, it is thereby hardly recognized or valued in school settings (Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2018). Yet, as the data indicates, parents in this study demonstrated their efforts to be part of the school activities they were familiar with and a willingness to learn about and be involved in the school events they are unfamiliar with (Antony-Newman, 2020; Duran, Carruba-Rugel & Solis, 2020; Morales-Alexander, 2020). Supporting Isik-Ercan's work (2010, 2018), it is clear that when international relocatee parents face differences in life situations, as in the example of familiar and unfamiliar school events, it becomes a balancing act. They must decide whether or not to rely on deeply rooted values from their home country or try to include the values vital in their new country.

Therefore, participants' involvement in school activities included attending parent-teacher conferences, parental educational events, and community festivals; volunteering in their child's classroom if invited by the teacher; regularly communicating with the teacher; and attending parent teacher association meetings or any other parental involvement events initiated by the Early Education Center. According to the current literature, if parents are taking part in

these kind of school events, they are considered as involved parents. However, for my study, participants' involvement in school activities was viewed more as an extension of the involvement activities they carried on at home, rather than just focused on school related activities.

These findings suggest that it is important to think of a new, broader, and unified definition of parental involvement. This definition should clearly state that parental involvement can take different forms (Isik-Ercan, 2018; Morales-Alexander, 2020) and not only include events visible to school, but acknowledges what parents do at home to support the school education.

Moreover, these findings add to the recent study conducted by Duran, Carruba-Rugel & Solis (2020) that examined how heritage language and cultural funds of knowledge of Latinx immigrant families served as a powerful resource to engage these families in the decision making of their children's schools. Once parents were exposed to a better understanding of their role in the decision making of their children's school with the help of parent coordinators and cultural brokers, they became active participants at the school board meeting advocating for their children (Duran, Carruba-Rugel & Solis, 2020).

Arguably, as international relocatee parents, my study participants also faced many challenges that hindered their effective involvement in their children's school activities. Coming from different cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds, their expectations often did not correspond to the prevailing norms and regulations that are in place at their children's preschool in the U.S. (Turney and Kao, 2009: Homby & Blackwell, 2018; Li, 2016). My study participants were highly educated, financially stable, and either working as professionals or pursuing a graduate degree. They spoke multiple languages including English and had lived in the U.S. for

some time. Despite these positive characteristics, they were not familiar with the pre-K educational system. The cultural and educational differences of their host country remained one of the main barriers that hindered their involvement in school activities (Turney and Kao, 2009: Jafarov, 2015; Homby & Blackwell, 2018).

With education beliefs gained abroad that are in contrast to what is in place in the U.S. preschools, my study participants in particular faced challenges in understanding the school culture (Isik-Ercan, 2010) i.e., the expectations school has for them and their young children (Tobin et al., 2013, 2016), curriculum that promotes play and inquiry over traditional learning (Yahya 2016), services that school has to offer like family counseling (Daucet, 2011), and effective ways to communicate with teachers and other school personnel (Jafarov, 2015; Schneider & Arnot, 2018).

Consistent with the previous research (Isik-Ercan 2010, 2018; Jafarov, 2015, Homby & Blackwell, 2018; Norheim & Moser 2020; Turney & Kao 2009), international parents had challenges in understanding school culture, policies, and norms even when they did not have language barriers. This mainly happened due to the school personnel's lack of intercultural communications skills, cultural knowledge, and contextual language that was used within the school (Isik-Ercan, 2010, 2018).

In addition, parents' misconceptions about the inquiry-oriented, play based curriculum of the Early Education Center, in particular those parents who were new to the school culture, created another barrier that widened the gap between learning that happened at home and learning that happened at school. Parents voiced their beliefs that while an inquiry-oriented, play based curriculum met their children's physical, as well as social and emotional needs, they did not believe the curriculum was meeting the academic goals they had for their children (Miller

Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Yahya, 2016). As these study participants had high academic expectations for their children, they feared that their children would not have future successful careers and life. Therefore, parents turned to skills-based instruction at home with a strong emphasis on academics and sought outside support in some instances.

My study participants, sharing a traditional instructivist teaching and learning background, in particular those who were new to school, had difficulties understanding the constructivist approach to teaching and learning, therefore questioning the rigor of new curriculum. This misunderstanding makes sense, given that international parents' understanding of teaching and learning is based on their prior educational experiences in their home countries, which is in line with the previous studies (Antony-Newman, 2019; Morales-Alexander, 2016; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021; Yahya, 2016).

In addition, parents in this study had a strong desire to raise bi/multilingual and bi/multicultural children. However, parents said they could not imagine anything the school could do to help them in that mission and that they considered the task mainly as one performed at home and the responsibility of parents. However, by doing so parents encountered many challenges and had many questions (Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015) which they never voiced to their children's teacher or other school personnel.

As a result, instead of working together with their children's school to find answers to their questions about the new approach to teaching and learning and effective ways to raise bi/multilingual, bi/multicultural children, parents turned to themselves i.e., to their "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 2005) and their local ethnic and cultural communities (Rogoff, 2003) like "Sunday Schools" (Isik-Ercan, 2010) as a support network to educate and raise their young children according their own values and academic expectations.

Rogoff (2003) refers to cultural communities as "groups of people who have some common and continuing organization, values, understanding, history and practices" (p. 80). From a sociocultural perspective, it is the effort of individuals that form the basis of the cultural practices. Thus, providing their young children with another school that provided linguistic and cultural learning at home or in the local community became a new cultural practice that ten out of thirteen study participants had to embrace in their new home. Indeed, young children who spent the whole day at school came home to attend another school that usually started later in the day or during the weekends in Sunday Schools. Here is how one of my study participants, Zhan Wei, a father from China, expressed his concern:

> To be honest, it takes too much time. And you know, we are international parents and the way, if we want our kids to speak both languages, we need to teach our kids at home. So, which means we spend much more time to teach our kids than the other parents. So actually, every night at home they are very busy until another school starts at home. We do like an activity about math and I have reading time in Chinese and English, then we have phonic time again for Chinese and English, and that's every day. (Zhan Wei Focus Group Interview, December 10, 2019)

This quote contains a three-fold explanation of why parents have another school at home. First, parents assume that school is not able to support the academic goals they have for their young children based on what is already in place at schools. Secondly, parents sharing the High Power Distance cultural dimension (Hofstede, 1981, 2001) and don't feel comfortable questioning the school structure and sharing their academic expectations and concerns with their children's teacher. Finally, even if parents are able to express themselves in English, they are not acquainted with the school context and fear sounding culturally inappropriate when

communicating their needs to their children's teacher. In a way, it is a cross-cultural communication barrier which is based on the High Context (HC) communication style (Hall, 2000) that stops parents from being in an open dialogue with their children's school personnel. Therefore, it is easier to accept and comply with what the school has to offer and continue to work with their young children based on their funds of knowledge, educational background, beliefs, and expectations, which are mostly in contrast to what is in place in their children's new schools (Antony-Newman, 2020; Isik-Ercan, 2018; Morales-Alexander, 2020).

However, it is important to note that once international parents become more familiar with their new home's educational, societal, and cultural expectations, their perspective changes. One of the strengths of the sociocultural perspective is that it emphasizes the phenomenon of "change" and the interactional process of culture (Morales-Alexander, 2016). As stated by Rogoff (2003), "Humans develop through changing participation in the socio-cultural activities of their communities which also changes" (p. 11).

As people gain experiences over time, growing and developing into and within their new life contexts, changes inevitably happens, creating new ideas and practices that expand and add to the knowledge bases and perspectives of international parents. This is evident from this study, where three participants out of thirteen shared different perspectives as a result of the time, curiosity i.e., willingness to learn and question new norms, as well as educational and professional experiences they were exposed to in their new host country. These findings are in line with Rogoff (2003), who stated:

> Individual development constitutes and is constituted by social and cultural historical activities and practices. Culture is not an entity that influences individuals. Instead, people contribute to the creation of cultural processes and cultural processes contribute to

> the creation of people. Thus, individual and cultural processes are mutually constituting rather than defined separately from each other. (p. 51)

This phenomenon is also supported by the funds of knowledge framework that states:

> Human beings and their social worlds are inseparable. They are embedded in each other; thus, human thinking is irreducible to individual properties or traits. Instead, it is always mediated, distributed among persons, artifacts, activities, and settings. People think in conjunction with the artifacts and resources of their social worlds, and these artifacts and resources, in turn, are made available through the social relationships and settings within which human beings constitute their lives. (Moll et al., 2005, p. 26)

Altogether, the findings of the study revealed that international relocatee parental involvement practices utilized at home, in school, and in community to support the early learning and development of their young preschool age children are evidence that these are involved parents. As stated earlier and supported by the existing literature and sociocultural theoretical lens, the parents' everyday choices of the practices were based on their beliefs in doing what is best for their child at an early age. Furthermore, their choices entailed the knowledge parents possessed on the activities that are developmentally appropriate and helped the child to grow physically, social-emotionally, and cognitively. Lastly, it is the lived experiences plus cultural and educational background that shaped these parents' vision on the choice of practices they used to promote the holistic development of their children in their host country. Moreover, as parents engaged with their children and their children's schools and communities, their cultural, educational, and life experiences expanded, creating an additive effect to their existing parental involvement frameworks.

Consequently, the findings of this study continue to support the existing research. Due to rapid demographic shifts in the United States, there is a need to think about the new broader definition of parental involvement. Understanding that the traditional framework of parental involvement based on the norms and rituals of white, middle-class families in the U.S. (Isik-Ercan, 2018) does not match with the experiences and cultural background of international relocatee parents gives a clear direction into the urgency of creating an unified parental involvement framework that corresponds to the needs of all families and their young children.

Implications and Recommendations

The study findings illustrate the difficulty of defining and conceptualizing parental involvement in early childhood education. The absence of a shared definition of parental involvement for all families and for all schools makes it challenging to incorporate the concept into the early education and care program as well as teacher training institutions. Therefore, in the light of these findings, it is suggested to re-define the concept of parental involvement and, based on that definition, create a parental involvement framework that not only acknowledges the values and rituals of the dominant culture but is inclusive of all families and their young children. That unified definition should entail every effort parents are making to support the holistic development of their child, acknowledging those efforts as an asset to build upon.

Practice

Developing a clear and concise definition of parental involvement based on the philosophy of each early childhood education and care program is highly essential. This definition has to be reflected in the mission statement and the vison of the early education and care programs. Having clear expectations from the parents demonstrates how the EEC is willing to embed a culture of parent involvement in all aspects of their early childhood program, from

planning their curriculum to meeting children's individual needs. In order to effectively communicate this message to parents, a short pamphlet about parental involvement and what is expected from parents needs to be developed and shared with parents, translated into various languages if needed and explained thoroughly to parents during orientation meetings.

Designing and conducting pre- (beginning of the school year) and post- (end of the school year) cultural assessments/surveys that not only include demographic information but also qualitative information about the expectations and perceptions of parents, teachers, and school leadership on parental involvement and other important questions relevant to the school would be beneficial as well. Following a thorough interpretation of the data, school personnel can create a strategic plan that validates alternative forms of parental involvement, specifically, one that includes the needs of the international relocatee parents. Creating alternative parental involvement (Isik-Ercan, 2018; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021) examples discussed in this study will help to eradicate norms that only prioritize the dominant culture and will invite international families to be part of the school.

Early Childhood educators and international relocatee parents should embrace each other's cultural strengths (Isik-Ercan, 2016) and funds of knowledge (Moll et al., 2005). At the same time, it is vital for both sides to view each other's roles as experts (Isik-Ercan, 2016) in children's early learning and development. Cultivating positive and supportive partnerships between early childhood professionals and families is an ongoing process. These partnerships require reciprocal respect and open communication. Once both sides establish mutual trust, open communication, and willingness to learn from one another with the goal to expand and add to their funds of knowledge, these new funds of knowledge will pave the way to build the partnership that is desirable and beneficia for both.

Schools should intentionally design events (formal and informal) that provide relationship-building opportunities between and among international relocatee parents, school personnel, and other parents in order to set the stages for creating the positive and supportive partnerships. School personnel may need to reach out to international relocatee parents in ways that do not correspond to the traditional home–school interactions. It is highly important for teachers to know how international relocatee parents are involved in their children's learning. Therefore, a home visit is one of the promising approaches that showed positive results in the U.S. and Britain (Cremin et al., 2012; Whyte & Karabon, 2016). Teachers vising the homes of their students will have an opportunity to learn about the life circumstances of families and practices parents use to support the learning of their children, including literacy practices used to teach the home language. However, teachers should always make an effort to understand the cultural context of such a visit and cooperate with the family in advance to make the home visit a positive experience for all, including pre-service students.

Reinforcing the role of parent liaisons or school counselors at school will help tremendously to bridge the gap between home and school, which was widely discussed in this study. In particular, a parent liaison equipped with the knowledge and understanding of intercultural communication and second language acquisition can operate between the two worlds (Sanders, 2008) and serve as a "go to" person in schools. Most of the study participants indicated a need to have someone help them to explain any confusing situations and answer any questions they have in regards to their children's new school. Therefore, once the role of the parent liaison is clearly defined to parents, it can help avoid many miscommunications and misunderstandings that happen between parents and their children's school personnel (Sanders, 2008).

Schools should provide access to curricular and instructional resources and effectively communicate that information to parents (Isik-Ercan, 2018; Miller Marsh & Raimbekova, 2021). Providing international relocatee parents with adequate knowledge of constructivist curriculum could include a demonstration of a play activity at a meeting or a recorded video on the school's website showing how play and inquiry contribute to the developing of pre-reading and pre-math skills. This would help international relocatee parents gain good knowledge and understanding behind the play based, inquiry-oriented curriculum, so they can differentiate between the constructivist and instructivist/traditional approach to teaching and learning. By having a clear understanding of the play based, inquiry-oriented curriculum, international relocatee parents and teachers will have more avenues to openly talk about the curriculum and collaborate toward creating desired learning experiences for the children.

Supporting bilingual and bicultural competencies of the young international children is crucial and highly desired by international relocatee parents, as reported in this study. Research clearly demonstrates how bilingualism supports cognitive abilities, especially in executive functions (Engel De Abreu et al., 2012) and its components such as inhibitory control, monitoring, switching, and updating (Bialystok, 2010). In addition, cognitive benefits in the areas of attention control, working memory, abstract and symbolic representation skills, and metalinguistic awareness were found in a meta-analysis (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010).

Therefore, bilingualism and biculturalism of the young international children should be encouraged by schools and taken as a strength that builds resiliency and confidence and helps young children feel a connection between home and school. The Critical Language, along with Second Language Acquisition Departments at the Higher Education Level, can support the

mainstream schools in developing learning modules and provide on-going professional development for the school personnel.

Providing integrated support for international relocatee parents is highly important, in particular for newcomers. Access to information is important as understanding eligibility for services available for international relocatee parents. For these families, early education and care centers are often the first context in which they encounter differences between their home culture and the expectations of their new country (Suarez-Orozco et al., 2015; Tobin et al., 2013; Tobin, 2016). Therefore, the EEC can support new families and help them connect with available and integrated services, such as applications for social services, educational career support, employment help, ESL classes, marriage and family therapy, and/or community resources for children's education and well-being.

Encouraging and supporting more experienced parents who are mentoring newer parents through application for social services and hosting casual gatherings for families, such as coffee hours, international tea parties, international friendship programs, cooking classes, book clubs, and cultural events and festivals are some of the examples that can be offered in the center's building. These opportunities are both convenient for parents and provide international relocatee parents with intercultural experiences that are highly important to their sociocultural and educational growth in their host country (Isik-Ercan at al., 2016).

Teacher Education

It is evident from previous research that teachers do not feel adequately prepared to work with parents, in particular parents from a different cultural and linguistic background, class, and race (De Bruine et al., 2014). However, when teachers are equipped with related knowledge and skills, it brings enormous benefits for teaching practice and parent-school relations (Hoover-

Dempsey, Walker, Jones & Reed, 2002). Therefore, university education departments, early education and care leadership as well as policy makers could work together to provide support for pre-service and in-service teachers so they can feel confident working with parents from all backgrounds, including international relocatee parents.

Policymakers, along with Curriculum Committee members at a Higher Education level, can require teacher education programs to include content on parental involvement with an emphasis on early learning and development of bilingual and bicultural children and strategies to integrate the children's languages and cultural practices into their daily curriculum, as well as encourage international relocatee parental involvement in the education of their young children. The ECE leadership could provide ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers. Both pre-service teacher training institutions and early education and care centers need to intentionally design learning events to enhance the intercultural and international experiences of early childhood professionals locally and internationally. While the existing teacher education curriculum might not have space for new materials on parental involvement, it is the concerted efforts by policymakers, preschool leaders and teacher educators (Goodall, 2018; Pushor & Amendt, 2018) who can create a space and bring the new knowledge and skills that are so urgent in light of the recent demographic changes in the U.S.

Therefore, teacher educators can assess their early education programs to make certain coursework addresses content on international relocatee parental involvement with an emphasis on early learning and development of bilingual and bicultural children. Strategies to integrate children's primary languages and cultural practices in the daily curriculum and ways to make connections with parents from all backgrounds need to be included in teacher education coursework.

Policymaking

Although the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) continues to emphasize the critical importance of parental involvement in children's education and has created six principles of effective practice on family engagement (NAEYC n.d.), the findings of this study illustrate the difficulty of defining and conceptualizing parental involvement in a broader context in early childhood education**,** which is also in congruence with the study conducted by Hilado, Leanne & Philips (2013).

Therefore, it is recommended that leading organizations such as NAEYC should consider a new and broader definition of parental involvement, one which recognizes that such involvement can take different forms. As this research has shown, parental involvement includes not simply being involved in ways visible to school staff, but also what parents do at home to support or supplement school education. This is particularly important when parents come from a culture outside the mainstream represented at their school. In that case, parental involvement may take the form of supporting language learning and providing cultural knowledge important in the home culture. Such involvement may be invisible to school staff, but it is, nevertheless, "involvement."

The Importance of Bilingual Education from Early Years

The current policies, like Every Student Succeeds Act (2015), should promote learning or at least offer a choice of learning a second language in the U.S from early years. Many educational systems all over the world follow one of the UNESCO's objectives in its 2002 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity which encourages, "the learning of several languages from the earliest age" (UNESCO, 2002).

There is an abundance of evidence that points to the benefits of bi/multilingualism. In addition, learning in the first language in school context was found to be as important as English language instruction (Bang, 2011; Riggs, Shin, Unger, Spruijt-Metz, & Pentz, 2014). The culture of the host country and English language should supplement but not replace children's first languages and cultures (Bang, 2011; Riggs et al., 2014; Wahlstrom, 2015) and various language learning opportunities from early years will provide what is a twenty-first century essential skill. Therefore, while the school might not be able to offer all the languages spoken by its international student population, offering a choice of learning a new language is always an asset (Bang, 2011; Riggs et al., 2014).

Further Research

Future researchers should focus on studying early education professionals', including early childhood administrators', perceptions on parental involvement in the early education of their young children. As a previous study illustrates, it is the teacher's role in parental involvement and understanding of the intricacies of parental practices at home, at school, and in the community that will allow the mainstream schools in the U.S. to avoid viewing parents from a deficit perspective (Baquedano-Lopez, Alexander & Hernandez, 2013).

Moreover, it would be beneficial to conduct longitudinal studies following the recently arrived international relocatee parents until their children complete preschool or kindergarten to learn how their perceptions on parental involvement develops and changes over time. Since the interview sample was mainly similar in terms of socioeconomic and immigration status, it would be interesting to see if any variations in study results would occur with differences in socio-economic background, immigration status, and country of origin.

In addition, studying the perceptions of parents who speak English language and those who don't would be another avenue to explore for further studies. It would also be worthwhile to conduct a comparison study with parents whose children attended preschool in the U.S. and followed the inquiry-oriented, play based curriculum and children who attended a more traditional preschool in the U.S.

Lastly, international (studies done in a different country) and comparative studies i.e., studies done in two different countries, like the U.S and Tajikistan, on parental involvement practices used to support the early learning and development of young children would also be helpful and informative for in-service and pre-service teacher training purposes to enhance ECE professionals' cross-cultural perspectives on parental involvement practices and child-rearing beliefs.

Conclusion

The intent for this multi-case research study was to discover how thirteen international relocatee parents defined and portrayed their parental involvement practices in supporting their young children's early learning and development. Data collected and analyzed from the demographic questionnaire, researcher's journal, thirteen one-on-one and two focus group interviews supports the sociocultural theoretical base that parents relied on their socio-cultural historical background, i.e., on "funds of knowledge" (Moll et al., 2005) and "cultural regularities" (Rogoff, 2003) like culture, education, and lived experiences, to understand and enact their parental involvement practices.

There is plenty of evidence to suggest that parents in this study understood and portrayed their involvement practices within their socio-cultural and socio-historical context. Besides, as they engaged with their new socio-cultural context in the U.S., especially with their children's

new school, they were learning and actively using the new knowledge as the basis to expand their parental involvement practices. As the findings revealed, the involvement practices not only resembled what their children's preschool expected them to do but rather using their familial funds of knowledge, specifically including the home and host country cultural and linguistic values, parents made purposeful choices to ensure their children grow up as well educated, good mannered, decent human beings, respectful and aware of both home and host country languages and cultural values.

Apart from this, all study participants had a strong belief that involving teachers, early childhood programs, or any related community resources in their childrearing efforts is a vital aspect in achieving the goals parents have for their young children.

Therefore, this study has a strong implication for the field of early childhood education and home, school, and community partnerships. The findings of the study provide evidence that parents' goals and desires for their young children are crucial to their involvement efforts. While school personnel expect both domestic and international parents to have the same goals for their children's education, in actuality, the international parents in this study had different goals. These differing goals created a gap between the school practices and home practices for the international families.

To bridge this gap, early childhood education leaders, teachers, administrators, and policymakers need to be open to shifting their own Eurocentric beliefs and the privileges. This requires one to create an "additive/extended" mindset that does not require one to "unlearn" or "unfollow" one's own beliefs but instead to learn from international relocatee parents and add to what is already in place. In other words, the mindset helps one to see the cultural knowledge of families as a strength rather than as a deficit. Recognizing this strength as a resource will help

education officials to create parental involvement programs that are culturally relevant and inclusive for all parents.

The same can be true for international relocatee parents. Being immersed in the different cultures of home and host country, it is vital for international relocatee parents to become "learners," taking what they think the best of both cultures and trying to merge them into new funds of knowledge. These new funds of knowledge are essential for their daily life and their work with their young children in their new host country.

However, it is important to note that there is not a universal idea of what is "best" from each culture and would be dependent on the parents' own perspective and background. Each parent may have a different expectation regarding their time in the U.S. and whether they feel obligated to adopt elements of U.S. culture, for example.

Rogoff (2003) emphasizing this point stated:

> Learning from other communities does not require giving up one's own ways. It does require suspending one's own assumptions temporarily to consider others and carefully separating efforts to understand cultural phenomena from efforts to judge their value…There is always more to learn. (p. 12).

Education officials seeing parents as learners and assets will contribute to the education and well-being of young children who have the potential to become future citizens of the United States of America.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A:

RECRUITMENT LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS

Appendix A

Recruitment Letter and Consent Form for Parents

Dear Parents/Guardians,

My name is Lolagul Raimbekova and I am a PhD student at the Kent State University, Kent, Ohio, College of Education Health and Human Services at the Department of Teaching, Learning and Curriculum studies, working under the supervision of Professor Monica Miller Marsh. I am writing to ask if you are interested to take part in my doctoral research named Parents' Voice: International Parents' Perspectives on Parental Involvement Practices in Their Young Children's Early Learning and Development.

The main goal of the study is to understand parental involvement practices of International parents, whose children attend preschool in the United States. I am interested to learn how parents are involved in their children's early education and development of their young children at home, in school, and in the community. The research shows that parental involvement affects the academic, social-emotional and behavioral outcomes for young children, but there is not much known about the experiences of International families and their young children. The objectives of the study are to learn about how international parents see their role in their children's early education and how their understanding of such a role matches the expectations of the school in the U.S.

Your participation will include an interview of between sixty to ninety minutes and a focus group discussion conducted in the place you find the most convenient (home, University campus, coffee shop, public library, etc.), and it is absolutely voluntary. Interviews/focus group discussions will start only after you sign the consent forms, and they will be audio recorded as long as you give your consent for such recording. Responses will not be judged, and you will

have the opportunity to withdraw from the interview/focus group discussions at any time or refuse to answer any question without any negative consequences. In case of withdrawal no data will be used.

Gathered data will be accessible only to me Lolagul Raimbekova and my supervisor, Professor Monica Miller Marsh. All audio recordings will be destroyed at the end of the study, while interviews and focus groups transcriptions will be encrypted and stored on my personal computer for 5 years before being deleted.

If you agree to participate in accordance with the above-mentioned conditions please return the consent form with your signature, date and name to me. Please keep one copy for your reference.

Thank you for your time and cooperation. Feel free to contact me if you have any questions by sending an e-mail to XXX@XXX.XXX or calling (330) 000-0000. You may also contact my supervisor Professor Monica Miller Marsh at (330) 000-0000 or by e-mail XXX@XXX.XXX. If you have any questions about your rights as participants, you can contact the University Research Ethics Board.

Your participation in my study would be greatly valued and appreciated.

Sincerely,

Lolagul Raimbekova

Parent Consent Form

I acknowledge that I have read and understood details of the research described in the recruitment letter written by Lolagul Raimbekova on (date_____)

I fully understand that my participation will involve the following activities and conditions: Activity:

- an interview (60-90 minutes) and consequent focus group discussions to be audio recorded

Conditions:

- All my personal information will be kept confidential. Research ethics program may have confidential access to data to ensure that participant protection procedures are followed

I will be free to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

I agree to participate in the study Parents' Voice: International Parents' Perspectives on Parental Involvement Practices in Their Young Children's Early Learning and Development. I understand that the signing of this form is strictly voluntary.

I am returning this signed and completed consent form to Lolagul Raimbekova, and I have been given a copy of the recruitment letter and this consent form.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX B

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

1. Name: _____
2. Age: _____ Country of origin: _____
3. First language: _____
4. Language (s) spoken at home with children: _____
5. Education (high school, college, university, etc.): _____
6. If you got degree from a university outside of your home country, which one(s)?

   _____
7. Occupation: _____
8. How long have you been living in the United States? _____
9. Children's birth country: _____
10. Children(s) gender and age(s)_____

APPENDIX C

ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Appendix C

Interview Questions

Immigration /transition

1. Could you describe your immigration to the U.S. (reasons for immigration, experience of job hunting, education, language and cultural differences)?

Academic expectations

2. How can you compare your school experience in your home country with the education your child is receiving in the U.S.? Is there a difference in curriculum and pedagogy?

3. Describe your child's school in the U.S? Do you talk about school with your child? What educational expectations do you have for him/her/them?

4. What do you feel is important for your child to learn at this age? Do you see that happening at your child's school? If not, what would you like to see happen in the classroom that you are not currently seeing?

Parental involvement at home, school and community

5. How would you describe your involvement in your child's education both in the home country (if applicable) and in the U.S.?

6. Tell me about your child's extracurricular activities. Describe how you supervise your child's use of time and behavior. Are your children receiving any tutoring (e.g. Sunday schools, English language, etc.)?

7. In what ways do you participate in your child's early learning and development? Do you participate or volunteer in the classroom, attend class or school meetings? Are you involved in other school activities? What about activities you do together at home?

8. How useful do you find parent-teacher conferences, parent connections meetings and other PI involvement initiatives at your child's school? Are you satisfied with the information you receive during these events?

9. Do you do any reading activities with your child at home? What language do you read in? Is keeping L1 important for your family?

10. What types of parental involvement do you think are the most effective for academic achievement and good behavior?

11. What are the greatest challenges you face as a parent in this country? What would help you to be more/better involved in your child's education and development at home, school and local community?

Communication with school/teachers

12. Do you feel comfortable talking to your child's teacher about your child? What do you see as a main barrier in communicating with your child's teacher? What would help you to improve the communication with your child's school?

13. Do you communicate your needs to the family services coordinator, parent liaison or school counselor if there is one in your child's school?

14. How well do you think your child's school provides information to international parents? What would help you get more or better information, please elaborate?

15. What do you want your child's school to know about your family? Anything about your home culture?

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

Appendix D

Focus Group Interview Questions

Parental involvement at home, school and community

1. What types of parental involvement do you think are the most effective for academic achievement and good behavior?

Communication with teacher

2. Do you feel comfortable talking to your child's teacher about your child? What do you see as a main barrier in communicating with your child's teacher? What would help you to improve the communication with your child's school?

3. How well do you think your child's school provides information to international parents? What would help you get more or better information, please elaborate?

Bilingualism and biculturalism /home language and culture maintenance

4. How important for you to keep your home language and culture? What challenges you face as a parent in raising a bilingual and bicultural child? How can your child's school support you in this regard?

Challenges

5. What are the greatest challenges you face as a parent in this country? What would help you to be more/better involved in your child's education and development at home, school and local community?

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