

Abstract

Title: LEARNING HOW TO NAVIGATE U.S. SOCIETY WITH YOUNG CHILDREN: EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANT MOTHERS UTILIZING EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

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Currently, one in eight individuals in the U.S. is foreign born (Camarota, 2007), with 75% of immigrants hailing from Latin America and Asia. Nearly one in four children in the United States are children of immigrants (Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaudry, 2010), and these children are the fastest growing segment of children in the country (U.S. Census, 2000 as cited in Matthews & Ewen, 2006b). Given this growth, grounded in Berry's (1997) acculturation framework and ecocultural theory (Weisner, 1997), this study investigated the lived experiences of immigrant mothers with young children as these mothers adjusted to being parents in the U.S. In particular, this study explored how mothers' immigration stories influenced their adjustment to the U.S. as well as how mothers' experiences in their countries of origin (COO) coupled with experiences in the U.S. shaped their ideas of parenting, and finally how mothers learned to navigate the early childhood care and education (ECCE) system. Also, this study examined how mothers used the ECCE system to build social capital in support of their parenting in the U.S.

An ethnographic approach was utilized to explore the experiences of 41 immigrant mothers living in Washington, DC and Virginia who were engaged with the ECCE system. Consequently, in-depth interviews as well as observations were conducted with immigrant mothers living in northern Virginia and Washington, DC, hailing from both Latin America (n= 22) and Africa (n=19). Data were analyzed using a modified grounded theory approach in which three waves of coding were conducted: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding.

The findings from this study indicate that mothers' immigration stories, including, their reasons for coming to a new host society, their journey and finally, adjustment to life in the new country, shaped their expectations of parenting in the U.S. Mothers' in this study negotiated parenting ideas and practices from the U.S. and their home countries to create a new social framework for parenting in the U.S. that was distinct from parenting in their COOs and the U.S. Finally, a process model emerged from the data reflecting these immigrant mothers' navigation of the ECCE system. It illustrated that mothers drew upon a variety of social, organizational, and geographic connections to find ECCE, sometimes faced obstacles to securing ECCE, and ultimately were able to develop important social capital as a result of utilizing ECCE.

The findings from this study will provide practitioners, policy makers, and researchers with a greater understanding of how immigrant families with young children adjust to life in the U.S., experience parenting, and how they navigate the U.S. ECCE system. This knowledge will contribute to creating the most effective programs, policies, and studies to support immigrant families.

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By

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Chapter 1: Introduction

One million immigrants enter the United States each year (Hernandez, 2009). In 2007 there were 37.9 million documented and undocumented immigrants in the U.S. Currently, one in eight individuals in the U.S. is foreign born (Camarota, 2007), with 75% of these immigrants hailing from Latin America and Asia (Hernandez, 2009). Between 2000 and 2007 over 10 million immigrants made their way to the U.S., the most in any seven year period in U.S. history (Camarota, 2007). Additionally, children of immigrants are the fastest growing segment of children in the U.S. (U.S. Census as cited by Matthews & Ewen, 2006b), with 23% of children under 18 having at least one foreign born parent (Hernandez, 2009).

Contemporary immigrant families are diverse in terms of language, country of origin, pre-immigration experiences, timing of immigration, socio-economic resources, education and geographic settlement (Dinan, 2006; Hernandez, 2009; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Despite this diversity, all immigrants are faced with having to learn how to navigate U.S. society. This task may be particularly daunting and challenging for immigrant *parents* of preschool-age children who need to negotiate U.S. social institutions and systems that support child and family life. Specifically, because of limited qualifications many immigrants are only able to find low-wage work, thus the majority (62%) of immigrant families are dual-earner households (Hernandez, 2009). Consequently, low-income immigrant parents of young children often need early childhood care and education (ECCE) so that both parents can work outside the home. Additionally, being enrolled in ECCE one year prior to Kindergarten that is of high quality is associated with better cognitive and socio-emotional outcomes later in

childhood, particularly for immigrant children (Magnuson, Lahaie & Waldfogel, 2006). Given the connection between ECCE and parents' employment and economic self-sufficiency as well as with developmental outcomes for children, understanding immigrant parents' experiences with the ECCE system is important. However, the literature is very limited in elucidating immigrant mothers' experiences as they adjust to life and negotiate parenting in a new country, and as they learn to navigate the ECCE system, including not only their decision-making process regarding ECCE but also what they gain from having their children in ECCE.

Much of the research on adjusting to life in a new host society is grounded in the ideas of acculturation. Acculturation has been broadly defined and conceptualized, as well as widely researched in terms of its impact on various developmental outcomes among children, adolescents, and adults. The classic definition of acculturation was provided by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936, p. 149), "acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups," (as cited by Berry, 1997, p. 7). Berry (1997) developed a fairly comprehensive and well accepted conceptualization of acculturation with two dimensions: individuals' interactions with the host culture and individuals' values and beliefs. Additionally, Berry (1997) asserts that acculturation is a two-way process between the individual and society.

As reflected in Berry's framework, cultural beliefs that individuals hold are an important part of adjusting to a new society. *Parents'* cultural beliefs, or parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 2006) are dynamic, shifting and changing across time

and context (Tamis-LeMonda, et al., 2007). These parenting ideas are shaped by not only cultural beliefs but also environmental factors and constraints, which are reflected in families' daily routines, and consequently contribute to parenting practices. This process of negotiating parental ethnotheories from parents' cultures of origin and from the U.S., among certain contextual constraints may be particularly important to understanding parenting practices among immigrant mothers.

In addition to negotiating their ideas and practices regarding parenting in the U.S., immigrant mothers are faced with needing to learn how to interface with a variety of systems, including the ECCE system. Research indicates that numerous demographic and familial factors (Lamb, 1998), characteristics of care (Hofferth, Chaplin, Wissoker, & Robins, 1996), as well as cost (Hofferth & Wissoker, 1992) and availability (Davis & Connelly, 2005) are linked with families' selection of ECCE. Despite this research, few studies have focused specifically on the factors that contribute to low-income, *immigrant* parents' selection and use of ECCE. Increased understanding of ECCE selection and utilization dynamics among low-income immigrants is important given that the quality of early child care is linked to children's cognitive and socioemotional readiness to enter Kindergarten, and some immigrant children who have not attended high quality ECCE tend to enter school less ready than their counterparts who have attended high quality ECCE (Magnuson, Lahaie & Waldfogel, 2006).

Despite the important research focused on child outcomes as a result of ECCE utilization, far less is known about the positive outcomes that *families* experience as a result of children being involved in ECCE. One body of literature that examines the functions of child care indicates that ECCE may have a social function such that it helps

immigrant children integrate into a new society by facilitating accepting interactions between native born and immigrant children (Vandenbroeck, 2006). In addition, other research indicates that parents may gather and create social capital as they interact with their children's ECCE programs—another possible social function of ECCE (Small, 2009). Social capital is particularly important to understand among immigrant populations because research over the last 45 years consisting of the most recent increases in immigration indicates that social capital or the resources drawn from familial and extra-familial relationships and networks (Coleman, 1988) are important for immigrants in terms of decreasing disadvantage (Aguilera & Massey, 2003; Loury, Modood, & Teles, 2005), and increasing well-being and child outcomes (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Runyan, et al., 1998); however immigrant families tend to have lower levels of social capital (Bankston & Zhou, 2002; Kao & Rutherford, 2007). Consequently, it is important to understand if and how ECCE programs may help immigrant parents develop social capital.

Moreover, from a historical perspective, societal institutions including the child welfare system, the public welfare system, public education system, and settlement houses all contributed to immigrant mothers' experiences navigating U.S. society. In particular these institutions influenced immigrants' abilities to build social capital through interactions with immigrants and non-immigrants, and the dynamics of immigrants' parenting ideas and practices.

The work of institutions to support immigrants in integrating and developing social capital is most important for the plethora of immigrants with young children, who arrive from developing countries (Hernandez, 2009), with limited education and English

language skills, as well as minimal financial resources (Suarez-Orozco, Suarez-Orozco, & Todorova, 2008; Dinan, 2006). These children and families' well-being are most at risk for negative outcomes related to disadvantage. These negative outcomes are particularly critical given that 20% of children of immigrants, defined as having at least one foreign-born parent (Capps et al, 2004), are living in official poverty and nearly one half are living below 200% of the federal poverty line (Hernandez, 2009). These children live in families with many strengths or protective factors including a high likelihood of living in a two-parent household (Dinan, 2006), strong work ethic (Dinan, 2006), high motivation of parents regarding their children's success (Fugligni, 2008), and potential for bilingualism and biculturalism (Hernandez, 2009). Additionally, there are many immigrant children who have highly educated parents who are financially secure (Dinan, 2006). However, despite these strengths among immigrant families, there are many immigrant children who face significant disadvantage, including poverty, parents with limited proficiency in English, low levels of formal education (Hernandez, 2009), as well as lack of health insurance and lower health status (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009).

Nearly 25% of all children in the U.S. are children of immigrants (Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaudry, 2010), and 50% of these children are enrolled in ECCE one year prior to Kindergarten. However, there is limited understanding of these families' ECCE experiences, and specifically how they make their way through the ECCE system and ultimately utilize ECCE to create social capital to support their parenting. Also, very few studies have considered specifically how immigrant families with young children navigate U.S. society, including negotiating their parenting ideas, as well as selecting

ECCE. Moreover, there is very limited research on how ECCE programs contribute to immigrant parents' social capital development. This study intends to fill these gaps in research by examining the experiences of immigrant mothers with children in ECCE programs as they parent their young children in a major metropolitan area in the U.S.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Policies and Institutions Shaping Immigrants' Adjustment to the U.S.: A History

U.S. approaches to policy related to immigrants and immigration shaped the demographic composition of each wave of immigrants to the U.S. throughout the last two centuries (Rong & Preissle, 1998) as well as the responses to these immigrants by various American institutions. The shifting ethnic composition and size of various waves of immigration, resulting from policy shifts, contributed to how various U.S. institutions including public education, settlement houses, child protective services, and social welfare, shaped the “Americanization” or “incorporation” of immigrants, and how these institutions supported immigrants’ development of social capital or the creation of social networks (Smelser & Alexander, 1998). Thus, the history of immigration and immigrants’ experiences in the U.S. is tightly interwoven with and shaped by not only the factors that have driven various waves of immigration, but also, the different social institutions that have changed over time to integrate diverse immigrants into U.S. society (Contreras, 2002). This history is particularly important to consider as a backdrop to understanding the role of contemporary institutions like ECCE in shaping immigrant mothers’ experiences adjusting to parenting in the U.S. today.

Pre-twentieth century immigration. From 1780 to 1875, or the first century of the U.S.’s existence, immigration was encouraged to meet the demands of the U.S. labor market (Martin & Midgley, 2006). Labor needs of the U.S. remained steady throughout the late 18th and early 19th centuries as reflected in the creation of the Naturalization Act of 1790, which allowed for citizenship among *white* immigrants who lived in the U.S. for multiple years (Spring, 2001). Immigration following this Act mirrored the “whiteness”

of this policy in that from 1790 through 1820, English speaking immigrants from the British Isles dominated the immigrant pool; followed by German and Irish immigrants during the mid-1800's (Rong & Preissle, 1998).

By the latter part of the 19th century, as American workers began to feel their jobs were being threatened by immigrant workers, qualitative restrictions or the barring of certain groups of individuals from immigrating into the U.S. began to occur. Specifically, the Immigration Act of 1882 made immigration from China illegal for over a half century based on the notion that Chinese immigrants were creating competition and job loss for U.S. workers in California (Martin & Midgley, 2006). It was also during this time that immigrants who were unable to financially support themselves were not admitted into the U.S. (Borjas, 2002).

The Progressive Era. In the 1910's, during the first peak of immigration in the 20th century, over 1,000 immigrants were entering the U.S. per day (Rong & Preissle, 1998). This swell in immigration, which resulted in 20 million immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe arriving between 1880 and 1914 (Rong & Preissle, 1998), led to federal legislation in 1917 that made passing literacy tests mandatory for any adult immigrants entering the U.S. Non-immigrant individuals believed that Anglo European beliefs, specifically Western and Northern European cultural values, were the only ethics that could sustain democratic ideals. During this time, the progressive movement emerged to reform the societal ills that were a result of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. These reforms led to the emergence of a number of social institutions, which aimed to assimilate Eastern and Southern European immigrants.

Founded in the late 1800's, the New York Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NYSPCC), was the first institution created in the country with the purpose of protecting children through the enforcement of various, already- existing child protection laws (Schiff, 1997). NYSPCC tried to address negative aspects of urban poverty and immigration by instilling middle class values in poor and immigrant families. Firmly grounded in the belief that assimilation of immigrants was best, the first president of NYSPCC, Elbridge Gerry, espoused that immigrants were not familiar with American laws, and in turn, mistreated their children by not limiting their level of employment, and forcing their children to engage in dangerous work. During its first 18 years in existence NYSPCC investigated 209,000 cases of children being mistreated of which, 36,300 children were ultimately removed from their parents' custody; the majority of the families impacted were immigrants (Schiff, 1997).

During the late 1800's and early 1900's, driven by a desire for a "unified, efficient society," settlement houses emerged as important institutions contributing to immigrants' acculturation experiences (Lissak, 1989, p. 13). Created in 32 states by the 1920's, these institutions were designed to "rescue" poor individuals, many of whom were immigrants. The most famous of these settlement houses was Hull House in Chicago, which was started by Jane Addams who held a more liberal approach to working with newcomer families. Addams firmly believed that there could not be political democracy in the U.S. without social democracy (Lissak, 1989). She maintained, if "immigrants were not forced to choose between two loyalties in becoming American, they would not lose their self-respect. This would make it much easier for them to start feeling American, to build their personal attachment to the community, and as a result they would become an

integral part of American society,” (Lissak, 1989, p. 31). In turn, Addams’ ideas of acculturation exhibit hints related to what Berry (1997) labels ‘integration’ in contemporary research on immigrants. She encouraged supporting immigrants in building informal networks among others from their own culture, as well as seeking out more formal supports including social welfare agencies, and finally participating in wider American political and economic systems (Lissak, 1989).

Addam’s philosophy ultimately seeped into the public school system as schools were considered the socializing institution, particularly of immigrant children. Specifically, Addams ideas began to reflect assimilation as she pushed for including coursework on culture and ethnicity and the removal of bilingualism in American classrooms (Lissak, 1989). Despite limited success in quelling the growth of immigrant enclaves and sub-communities, aspects of liberal progressives’ ideas were reflected among other institutions that continued to shape immigrants’ experiences.

The social fabric of the U.S. at the beginning of the 20th century, particularly in urban areas, was characterized by children of immigrants comprising 58% of students in America’s largest 37 metropolitan areas. Making public education mandatory during the early years of the 20th century was a direct result of societal goals related to the deculturalization, or stripping immigrants of their own cultures (Spring, 2001) and Americanization of immigrants such that democracy in the U.S. could be preserved. By 1909 laws dictating mandatory attendance in public schools were passed to “Americanize” children of immigrants (Smelser & Alexander, 1998). This nativism and fear of democracy being lost was reflected in citizenship classes that became common coursework in most public schools. Specifically, between 1903 and 1923 the number of

states requiring citizenship be taught in public schools rose from one to 39 states.

Additionally, during these years an increasing number of states created legislation that indicated English as the only language of public schools (Smelser & Alexander, 1998).

During this time quantitative restrictions on immigration emerged that constrained the composition of immigration in the 1920's to the composition of the U.S. in 1890. Congress passed legislation that limited immigration to three percent of the immigrants already living in the U.S.—using the 1890 demographic composition of the U.S. further limiting these quotas to favor mostly northern and Western European immigrants attempting to enter the U.S. (Martin & Midgley, 2006). Consequently, immigrants who were born in the United Kingdom, Germany, or Ireland were given greatest preference (Center for Immigration Studies, 1995). Additionally, the Oriental Exclusion Act of 1924 was passed, which further decreased the amount of Asian immigrants entering the U.S. in the second quarter of the 20th century (Rong & Preissle, 1998).

Post-civil rights movement. This national origins quota system was in place until immigration reform in the 1960's, which resulted in the passage of the Hart-Cellar Act in 1965. This Act, during the Civil Rights movement, reformed the Immigration Act of 1924 and was meant to end “racial and ethnic discrimination in immigration policy,” by repealing the quota system (Martin & Midgley, 2006, p. 13). The Hart-Cellar Act aligned with anti-racist ideals and the hope of abandoning the notion of an “all-white” nation (Brettell, 2008; Rong & Preissle, 1998; Spring, 2001); however proponents of the Act did not predict how precisely and quickly this legislation would ignite the second greatest wave of immigration America had ever known (Center for Immigration Studies, 1995).

Since the passage of the Hart-Celler Act, the immigrant population in the U.S. has quadrupled and in just the last two decades alone, it doubled (Vigdor, 2008). This legislative shift allowed immigrants from various countries to enter the U.S. if they had skills valuable to the U.S. economy or to reunify with family members (Rong & Preissle, 1998). The Hart-Celler Act changed the face of immigration in terms of age and ethnicity. Between 1960 and 1990 the percent of immigrants coming from Asian and Latin American countries increased drastically, while immigrants from Europe declined precipitously (Rong & Preissle, 1998; Spring, 2001). Additionally, since 1970 the number of children under age 18 with at least one immigrant parent has tripled, growing to 23% (Capps & Fortuny, 2006; Hernandez, 2009). With the passage of the Hart-Celler Act, public education and the child welfare system continued to be major institutions contributing to the integration of immigrants; however, with welfare reform, the social welfare system emerged as an institution that shaped immigrant parents' experiences of the U.S.

On the heels of the Hart-Celler Act and in an effort to preserve immigrants' cultures and languages, the bilingual education movement, led by Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, gained momentum (Spring, 2001). In 1968 the Bilingual Education Act passed (Contreras, 2002), which provided funds for schools districts to create and implement supplemental programs for immigrant children in public schools. Specifically, these programs were meant to not only teach children both English and Spanish, but to also teach children about Mexican and Puerto Rican cultures and histories, and to help families transmit their cultures to their children (Spring, 2001). This movement towards multicultural education as well as bilingual education resulted in

public school curriculum changes that placed more emphasis on culture throughout all aspects of the curriculum (Spring, 2001).

In addition to the public education system, the legal system and specifically, the child welfare system following the passage of the Hart-Celler Act of 1965, continued to contribute to immigrant families' acculturation experiences, particularly in relation to child rearing practices and the treatment of children. The U.S. Constitution assumes parents are children's best caretakers and it protects parents' rights to raise their children as they wish (Coleman, 2006). However, the boundary of parents' authority is defined by maltreatment laws, such that if parents' behaviors toward their children are outside of the societal norms of what is considered acceptable in relation to non-abusive and non-neglectful treatment of children, then the state can intervene (Coleman, 2006). Specifically, the state may intervene if parents are engaging in religious or traditional practices related to parenting, which are causing children to be maltreated. CPS continues to intervene in cases in which traditional parenting beliefs clash with U.S. societal norms for the treatment of children, shaping immigrants experiences of parenting in U.S. society.

The ownership society. In the 1980's the U.S. began to clamp down on increased illegal immigration precipitated by the apprehension of undocumented individuals by the U.S. Border Patrol. In 1986 the Immigration Reform and Control Act was signed into law by President Reagan to deter employers from hiring undocumented immigrants, while also granting amnesty to or legalizing 2.7 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. (Martin & Midgley, 2006). It was also during this time that tensions and disagreements regarding bilingual education increased, which ultimately

divided on political party lines. The Reagan administration aligned with conservative organizations including U.S. English, Save Our Schools, and the Heritage Foundation, who opposed bilingual education in favor of English-only curriculum and making English the official language; while Mexicans and Puerto Ricans in the Democratic political party continued to be strong supporters of bilingual education (Spring, 2001). As a result of the English-only movement, by the end of the 1980's, 17 states made English their official language (Spring, 2001). However it was also during the 1980's that the Supreme Court ruled in *Plyler v. Doe* (1982) that no immigrant child, regardless of documentation status of the child or their parents, could be denied access to public education (Contreras, 2002).

In the mid-1990's, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) was passed to reform welfare in the U.S. Aspects of this legislation targeted immigrants, and arguably contributed to their abilities to integrate into U.S. society. Specifically, any documented immigrants who entered the U.S. after 1996 were not eligible for any type of federally funded, public assistance until they lived in the U.S. for at least five years; however immigrants who were already in the U.S. when PRWORA passed were eligible for cash assistance under TANF, Medicaid, and the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) but were barred from Food Stamps and SSI until they became citizens (Cohen, 2007). Additionally, during this time regulations regarding sponsors for immigrants changed such that the sponsoring individual had to earn above the poverty line to support the arriving immigrant if necessary. These aspects of PRWORA were meant to reduce the cost of immigration on society and to inform

immigrants of the importance of responsibility and not becoming dependent on the government (Borjas, 2002).

The changing demographics of the U.S. as a result of immigration may be most apparent in public schools in the U.S., in which nearly one quarter of children have immigrant parents. Given this, specific sections of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 focused on improving educational outcomes for immigrant children (Capps, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwanto, 2004). NCLB legislation has resulted in changes in curriculum across all language programs (bilingual and English immersion), with greater focus on, “rapid English acquisition,” (Capps et al., 2004, p. 2). The focus on English acquisition led to greater emphasis on pre-Kindergarten (PK) programs, as research indicates that English language support early on can help with overall English language development among immigrant children (Capps et al., 2004).

In sum, immigration legislation throughout the last two centuries has influenced the demographic composition of the U.S. at certain points in history. Also, in conjunction with these changes in immigration, various institutions have shifted to contribute to immigrants’ adjustment to the U.S. society over time. Together the demography of the U.S. and ideas regarding the importance of incorporating immigrants have consistently influenced how various U.S. institutions including public education, settlement houses, the child welfare system, and the public welfare system treated, helped and sometimes hindered the adjustment of immigrants to U.S. society throughout history. With an increasing number of immigrant families with young children utilizing ECCE, and this being the first system with which many immigrant families have contact, it is important to understand how contemporary immigrant parents interact with this system.

Contemporary Immigrant Families in the U.S.

For the purposes of this study, immigrant families are defined as those families in which at least one parent is foreign born (Capps & Fortuny, 2006). Additionally, first generation (foreign-born children of immigrants), 1.5 generation (foreign-born children of immigrants who were younger than age 12 upon arrival), and second generation (native-born children of immigrants) will be referred to interchangeably as “children of immigrants” (Board of Children and Families et al., 1995; Capps & Fortuny, 2006) and “immigrant children” throughout this study. Specifically, in this study, the experiences of all families that include at least one foreign-born parent, including children born in the U.S. as well as children born in the country of origin (COO), will be considered. The experiences of immigrant families with young children tend to vary based on parents’ nativity, rather than children’s nativity. However, the majority of children of immigrants (90%) under age five in the U.S. were born in this country (Hernandez, 2009).

Nearly one quarter (24%) of all children in the U.S. ages three to five are children of immigrants (Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaudry, 2010). It is necessary to have an understanding of the unique combination of challenges experienced by immigrant families because as these risks accumulate, children’s developmental outcomes are impacted negatively (Effective Provision of Preschool Education project, 2004 as cited by Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2006). However the resources that immigrant families possess can provide a buffer against multiple risks. Focusing on, and developing immigrant families’ resources and potential social capital, as well as understanding immigrants’ cultural beliefs and practices that may be most protective, while at the same time addressing such challenges as language, poverty,

limited access to health care, and low parental education through ECCE, may help mitigate children's, negative developmental and academic outcomes. Specifically, research indicates that high quality ECCE reduces the negative impact of multiple risk factors, by improving pre-reading, literacy and numeracy skills, as well as socio-emotional development (EPPE, 2004 as cited by OECD, 2006). Additionally, parents with children in programs like Head Start that include health services more often report their children are in very good or excellent health compared to parents of children who are not in Head Start (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2005).

Resources.

Two-parent families. Living in a two-parent household may buffer some of the risks experienced by immigrant children. Research indicates that children living in two-parent households tend to have greater academic success and higher emotional well-being than their peers living in single-parent homes. Additionally, children who are raised in two-parent households are usually more emotionally close to both parents, experience fewer stressful situations and have a higher standard of living, as well as receive more effective parenting and co-parenting (Amato, 2005). In the U.S., compared to 80% of white, native-born children and 39% of black, native-born children, 82% of all children in immigrant families live with two parents (Hernandez, 2009).

Strong work ethic. Immigrant parents with a strong work ethic model for their children the importance of hard work and dedication, which may contribute to children's motivation to work hard in school. Additionally, consistently seeking and harnessing employment opportunities may help lessen these families' experiences with poverty (Hernandez, 2009). At 95% of families, the percentage of U.S. immigrant families in

which fathers were working in the past year, was the same as among native-born parents. However, this figure varied among immigrant groups-- Hmong (73%) and Iraqis (70%) exhibited the lowest engagement with work. In 62% of immigrant families the mother was working last year, compared to 75% in native born families. Additionally, in 19% of immigrant families there was another adult worker in the household; in native-born families this figure was 13% (Hernandez, 2009).

Bilingual and bicultural. Research indicates that being a “balanced bilingual” is associated with positive, cognitive developmental outcomes, including “attention control and linguistic awareness,” (Leseman, 2007, p.5). Immigrant children learn how to negotiate multiple cultural contexts including that of the host country as well as their culture of origin. These skills are especially important in a globalized economy. Among children in immigrant families in the U.S., 75% are English fluent, and nearly 50% of all immigrant children speak another language and speak English very well (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007).

Challenges.

Documentation status. Lack of documentation increases families’ risk of poverty, and inability to receive government benefits to address their financial needs. Often undocumented parents have children who are citizens and who are in turn eligible for government benefits. Parents without documentation are often reluctant to have their children utilize these benefits because they fear being deported. Consequently, children of undocumented parents are less likely to be enrolled in government programs, which might provide both high quality early childhood education and access to health care. In the majority (55%) of immigrant families in the U.S., children (birth to age 17) have at

least one parent who is undocumented or in a “mixed status” family, and 11% of immigrant children have two parents who are undocumented (Hernandez, 2009). Among young children (under age six) of immigrants, 26% have one parent who is undocumented (Matthews & Ewen, 2006b).

Limited English proficiency (LEP). Simultaneous acquisition and sequential acquisition are two types of second language acquisition that young children from immigrant families experience (Tabors, 2008). Simultaneous acquisition of language occurs when a child learns two languages from birth—neither language is dominant; while sequential acquisition is when a child learns their native language first, and then learns a second language after the first language is somewhat solidified (Tabors, 2008). Sequential acquisition occurs among most immigrant families in which both parents have limited proficiency in the dominant culture’s language. Often in these families, the second language is not learned until the child begins formal schooling. In the U.S., Liang, Fuller and Singer (2000) found that even after controlling for family socioeconomic status, the odds of using center-based child care are 60% lower for families that speak Spanish at home than their English speaking counterparts. In addition, research indicates that mother’s language proficiency is closely related to responsiveness to her infant, with mothers who have lower English proficiency being less responsive to their babies (Cabrera, Shannon, West, & Brooks-Gunn, 2006). Lack of experience with speaking English puts children at risk for communication issues in school that may interfere with their learning, increasing their risk of poor academic outcomes. Also, immigrant parents whose English speaking capabilities are limited, are less likely to access health care due to language barriers as well as limited knowledge of

the U.S. health care system (Ngo-Metzger et al., 2003; Yu, Huang, Schwalberg, & Kogan, 2005).

Approximately 40% of immigrant children in the U.S. live in families where only English is spoken; 16% of immigrant children live in households with parents of mixed language skills, where one parent is fluent in English and the other is an English Language Learner (ELL); finally, 44% of immigrant children live with two parents who are ELL (Hernandez, 2009). Living with two ELL parents is most common among Mexican (64%) and Somali (63%) immigrant children (Hernandez, 2009). One quarter of all children in the U.S. have at least one parent whose primary language in the home is something other than English; this figure is 87% for Latino children with immigrant parents.

Poverty, unemployment, and underemployment. Poverty and more limited access to resources important for children's development are associated with more adverse outcomes for children. Immigrant families, particularly those who have recently arrived in the U.S., tend to experience greater levels of poverty, higher rates of unemployment and underemployment, and lower wages (Harwood, Leyendecker, Carlson, Asencio, & Miller, 2002). Approximately 23% of children in immigrant families in the U.S. live in official poverty, compared to 15% of children in native-born families; additionally, 47% of all children in immigrant families live below 200% of the federal poverty threshold (Hernandez, 2009). For ELL parents this figure is highest at 48% of children in black African immigrant families in the U.S. living in official poverty (Hernandez, 2009). Among all low-income children, 25% are children of immigrants (Takanishi, 2004).

Rates of unemployment among immigrants and native-born individuals in the U.S. are similar, and thus, *underemployment* is a greater issue among immigrants. Despite exhibiting strong work ethic and the desire to be employed, according to Hernandez (2009), 23% of immigrant fathers are underemployed without full-time year round employment. Among immigrant groups in the U.S., Latinos have the greatest rate of incomes below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) (Ruiz de Velasco, Fix, & Clewell, 2000).

Low education of immigrant parents. Studies in the U.S. focused on immigrant parents indicated an association between limited education *and* low English skills, and poor school outcomes for children (Capps, et al., 2004). Specifically, studies show that informal education at home including literacy development through shared conversations, reading, and writing among family members is far more limited within families where parents have less education. This type of informal education is linked to cognitive and linguistic developmental outcomes, and in turn later school achievement (Leseman, 2009).

Level of education has also been connected with self-reported health status among adults ages 25 to 74. Specifically, a recent national report reveals that U.S. adults without a high school diploma were three times more likely than adults with a college degree, to be in less than very good health (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009). This gap in adult health based on education level was seen in all 50 states.

In the U.S. 35% of ELL immigrant families have 0 to 8 years of schooling; this figure is 19% for all immigrant families (ELL and non-ELL). According to Hernandez (2009) 68% of all fathers of immigrant children in the U.S. are high school graduates.

Among families from Mexico in which both parents are ELL this figure drops to 31%, trailed by immigrant families with two ELL parents from Portugal (35% of fathers are high school graduates).

Health status and healthcare. Despite experiencing mortality and morbidity rates lower than their native-born counterparts, immigrant infants, children, and adults have lower overall parent-reported and self-reported health status (Huang, Yu, & Ledsky, 2006). Research indicates that immigrants living in the U.S. longer tend to experience higher rates of chronic diseases like obesity, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease (Dey & Lucas, 2006). These examples illustrate the immigrant paradox or the notion that the longer immigrants, and particularly Latino immigrants are in the U.S. the more their health status worsens or the more acculturated immigrants are, the worse their health (Abraido-Lanza, Armbrister, Florez, & Aguirre, 2006). However additional research indicates that acculturation not only leads to unhealthy behaviors but, also those immigrants who are more acculturated, engage in healthier behaviors than their less acculturated counterparts, including more “leisure-time physical activity,” (Abraido-Lanza et al., 2006, p. 1343).

Immigrant children and families experience issues in relation to access to health care; specifically, low-income immigrants are more than two times (11% compared to 26%) less likely than their non-immigrant counterparts to have health insurance (Dey & Lucas, 2006; Huang, Yu, & Ledsky, 2006), due to economic barriers (Chavez, Flores, & Lopez-Garza, 1992). Additionally, immigrants, particularly Latino families, were less likely than their native born counterparts, to have a usual source of care (Dey & Lucas, 2006). Additionally, research indicates that cultural barriers to care including language,

as well as limited understanding of the health care system, can leave immigrants, “less connected with the health care system” (Huang, Yu, & Ledsky, 2006, p. 634). Other research indicates that immigrant parents are less likely than their native born counterparts to know where and how to access various community resources including those related to drug and alcohol abuse, teen pregnancy prevention, domestic violence, nutrition, and housing programs (Yu, Huang, Schwalberg, & Kogan, 2005).

Together the aforementioned characteristics associated with immigrant families in the U.S. help provide an understanding of the resources and risks these families confront. Specifically, these resources and risks influence the way immigrant mothers think about adjusting to life in the U.S. with young children, in terms of negotiating parental ethnotheories, as well as how they interact with various aspects of U.S. society including institutions like ECCE.

Adjusting to Life as a Parent in a New Host Culture: Theoretical Frameworks

The majority of research on immigrant families is grounded in ecological theory (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005; Eng et al., 2008; Farrell, Taylor, & Tennent, 2004; National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007; Lahman & Park, 2004; McHale, Updegraff, Kim, & Cansler, 2008), explaining the levels of influences on immigrant families’ experiences of adaptation to U.S. society. However this theory does not provide enough insight into important aspects of immigrant parents’ interactions with institutions like ECCE, as well as how immigrant parents of young children negotiate their parenting ideas and practices. In turn, the goals and methods of the proposed study are grounded in ecocultural theory (Weisner, 2002b), which draws on social constructionism and using an ecological framework to explain how parents’ ethnotheories and social capital

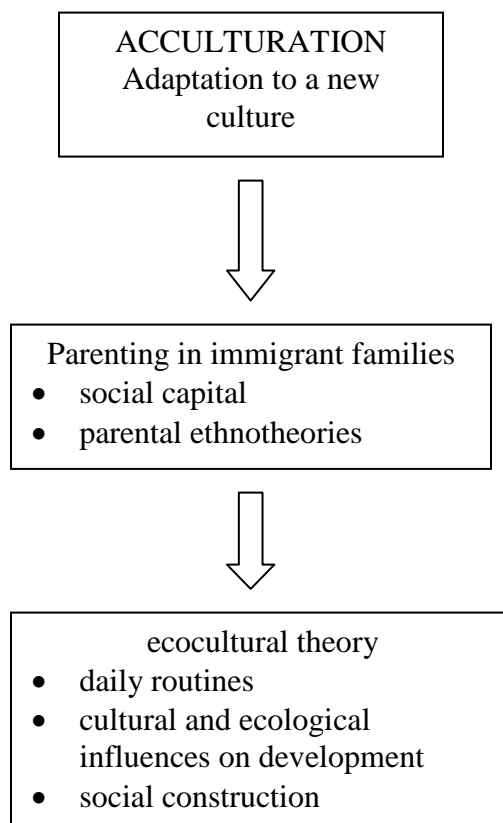
development are shaped by both cultural and structural or ecological factors, which are reflected in daily routines. See Figure 1. In addition to ecocultural theory, this study draws from Berry's (2006) acculturation framework, which specifically sheds light on the experiences of immigrants. Together these frameworks shed light on how adaptation and adjustment to a new society is shaped by cultural and contextual factors.

Intersection of acculturation, parenting, and ECCE. Acculturation has been widely defined, conceptualized and operationalized. Colloquially, the term acculturation is used to describe immigrants' adjustment to new societies. Earliest models of acculturation were unidimensional, such that acculturation was defined as the level of assimilation into American society that immigrants exhibited without regard for maintaining their cultures of origin (Lara et al., 2005). Using this conceptualization of acculturation researchers assumed that changes in individuals took place on a single continuum (Gordon, 1964 as cited in Birman, 2006). In other words the more immigrants began to "Americanize" the less they would think and act in ways related to their cultures of origin (Milton Gordon as cited by Lara et al., 2005).

Researchers went on to develop bidirectional constructs of acculturation, which considered immigrants' acquisition of the host culture and their experiences with their culture or origin to be on separate continua. These bidirectional measures of acculturation assume that immigrants' attainment of the host culture is independent from their level of acquiring or relinquishing their culture of origin (Hwang & Ting, 2008). In other words, immigrants continue to interact a lot with the new host culture, while at the same time maintaining many beliefs and values from their culture of origin (Berry, 2006). Specifically, Berry (1996) conceptualizes acculturation as a two-way dynamic process

between the individual and society such that immigrants' actions are only one predictor of acculturation experiences, with the host societies' levels of acceptance also being an important contribution to this process of adaptation. Additionally this process includes both maintenance of the beliefs and values of one's culture of origin *and* interaction with the host culture.

Figure 1: Framework of immigrant mothers' adjustment to life in the U.S.



Berry (1997) notes that individuals' processes of acculturation ultimately shape their long term psychological, sociocultural, and economic adaptation to the new society. Specifically, research indicates that there are three types of adaptation: psychological, sociocultural, and economic (Searle & Ward, 1990). Psychological adaptation refers to

internal outcomes experienced by the acculturating individual including identity, mental health outcomes, and satisfaction with being in the new host culture. Sociocultural adaptation consists of external aspects of acculturation including managing issues related to daily life such as family, school and work.

Immigrants' levels of engagement with and enjoyment of employment signifies their level of economic adaptation (Aycan & Berry, 1996 as cited by Berry, 1997). Extending Berry's model of acculturation to relate to the experiences of immigrant *parents*, this study maps the two aforementioned dimensions of acculturation, including, maintenance of the beliefs and values of one's culture of origin *and* interactions with the host culture, onto concepts used in the cross-cultural psychology and sociological literatures to describe aspects of parenting. These are: parental ethnotheories which is another term for parenting beliefs that ultimately influence parents' practices (Super & Harkness, 1996); and, social capital (Coleman, 1988). Consequently, this study aims to gather insight into how immigrant mothers experience parenting in the U.S., as they negotiate their parenting ideas, and as they navigate the U.S. ECCE system, creating important relationships that bear necessary resources for parenting in the U.S. ECCE programs shape immigrant parents' adjustment to living in the U.S. and ultimately their psychological, sociocultural, and economic adaptation to living in the U.S.

Defining culture. Given that acculturation is rooted in the notion of changes that occur when immigrants move from one culture to another, it is necessary to discuss what is meant by the term culture. According to D'Andrade, "One of the oldest terminological wrangles in anthropology is over the term *culture*," (1984, p. 114). Early conceptions of culture focused on knowledge or the shared beliefs and ideas needed to operate

successfully in a community (Goodenough, 1957 as cited by D'Andrade, 1984). A major question that arose from this definition was whether culture should be considered to be inside or outside the individual or both. This questioning led to further conceptualizations that moved beyond the psychology of the individual and included culture as a process, in addition to meaning systems (D'Andrade, 1984). Specifically, some assert that cultural meaning systems can be present in both the institutions of society as well as the psychology of individuals in a particular community, and that culture is a process whereby parents pass cultural ideas and beliefs to their children (Geertz, 1975 as cited by Levine, 1984).

Further, Swidler (1986) conceptualizes culture as a “tool kit” of habits, preferences, and abilities that contribute to “strategies of action” or the processes individuals experience to navigate their environment. During times of transition or “unsettled cultural periods” beliefs contribute to individual actions; however, it is contextual factors like social, institutional, and material resources (Lowe & Weisner, 2004) that shape action, and in turn determine which cultural beliefs remain (Swidler, 1986). Additionally, Weisner (1997) considers culture to be the ways that everyday activities of individuals and families reflect shared cultural models or beliefs of a community. The aforementioned definitions and conceptualizations shed light on the complex nature of culture, which includes aspects of meaning, process, and context. Components of each of these definitions guide the proposed study. Specifically, the importance of considering culture from inside and outside the individual will be addressed by examining parents’ cultural beliefs and values as well as their strategies of action interacting with aspects of society including ECCE and individuals throughout

their daily routines. These characteristics of culture will be considered specifically to understand the process parents experience as they negotiate a new cultural belief system as well as a new society, through interactions with their children's ECCE program.

First dimension: Parental ethnotheories. Culture plays an important role in shaping parents' ideas regarding their children's development. In particular, this notion of how parents' beliefs and practices are shaped by culture is reflected in parental ethnotheories, one aspect of children's developmental niche (Super & Harkness, 1996) and families' ecocultural niche (Weisner, 1997), or the contexts in which children develop that are influenced by both cultural and structural factors. "Parental ethnotheories are cultural models that parents hold regarding children, families and themselves as parents," (Harkness & Super, 2006, p. 62), where cultural models refer to, "shared understandings that frame experience, supplying interpretations of that experience and inferences about it, and goals for action" (Quinn & Holland, 1987, p. 6). Further, parental ethnotheories are reflected in the experiences of daily life among children and parents, and they are a result of cultural experience with the cultural community (Harkness & Super, 1992).

For the past few decades human development and family studies researchers, as well as scholars in the fields of anthropology, psychology, child development and sociology have become increasingly interested in parental belief systems and how cultural contexts influence the ways parents organize their cultural beliefs (Goodnow & Collins, 1990; Levine, 1974; Mead, 1972; Sigel, 1985; Whiting & Whiting, 1975). This interest in parents' beliefs has stemmed from a widely accepted idea that these beliefs influence parent-child interactions and in turn, developmental outcomes for children

(Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Kessen, 1979; Sameroff & Chandler, 1979). In addition to considering how parents' cultural beliefs impact developmental outcomes, researchers have used parental ethnotheories to illustrate how cultural ideas are transmitted across generations (Goodnow, 1996). Specifically, the ways parents' ethnotheories are exemplified through parenting practices in the context of families' daily routines has been the focus of much cross-cultural, ethnographic research (Weisner, 1997; Harkness & Super, 2006). Even more recent research indicates how parents' ethnotheories can change over time, as well as across various contexts (Tamis-Lemonda, et al., 2007).

Research indicates that certain large cultural groups in the U.S. have specific cultural beliefs to which they adhere. Of course, this is not to ignore the within group diversity that Latinos from different COOs as well as different socioeconomic backgrounds exhibit. However there are certain cultural beliefs that tend to be held among Latino families and African families. These are important to consider in relation to how immigrant mothers from these regions of the world think about parenting in the U.S.

There are a few cultural beliefs that many Latinos tend to refer to in their daily lives including respeto, familismo, machismo/ marianismo, and personalismo (North Carolina Institute of Medicine, 2003). Respeto or respect refers to the importance that Latinos place on interpersonal relationships. Specifically this idea emphasizes deferential behavior based on social status determined by gender, social class, or social position. In addition, based on this cultural belief confrontation is to be avoided. A second cultural belief that influences how Latinos think about parenting is the notion of "familismo" or the importance that is placed on developing strong family relationships, and putting these

relationships above all else. Also, these familial relationships are seen as the greatest source of support and advice, above all other potential supports, including institutions. Finally, machismo and marianismo refer to the ideas that the male is considered to be the familial authority figure in Latin American cultures; while women are considered to be responsible for the care of the children (North Carolina Institute of Medicine, 2003). Other research indicates that parents of Latino youth tend to exhibit authoritarian parenting styles (Dornbusch, Ritter, Leiderman, Roberts, & Fraleigh, 1987), as well as modeling, verbal directives, and negative physical control (Laosa, 1980). This early research also indicates that instilling family and religious values in children are the most important child rearing beliefs that Latino parents hold (Gonzalez-Ramos, Zayas, & Cohen, 1993 as cited by Zayas & Solari, 1994).

African families living in the U.S. draw much of their cultural beliefs from the Africentric perspective (see also Randolph & Koblinsky, 2001), which is comprised of 10 components that are based on African history and philosophy. These include the following:

- *Spirituality* refers to the belief in a Supreme being as well as an emphasis on individuals' characteristics, and experiences of the world, rather than their material possessions.
- *Communalism or interpersonal orientation* is reflected in the notion that the well-being of the group comes before that of the individual. This is illustrated by African American mothers' tendencies to emphasize the importance of teaching their children how to interact successfully with other children without the spirit of

competition. In addition, building rapport and making connections with individuals is extremely important to most African Americans.

- *Harmony* or the integration of all the components of one's life to create a whole, illustrates the importance of seeking unity rather than control.
- *Expressive communication or orality* refers to the significance of passing information through oral, rhythmic communication.
- *Affect sensitivity* is employed by parents when they use facial expressions rather than words to convey a message to their children. It is the intermingling of emotions and thoughts.
- *Rhythmic movement* or gross motor, physical, patterned action relates to the connectivity among the environment.
- *Multidimensional perception or verve* is illustrated in African Americans' preference for activities that engage multiple sensory experiences. For example African Americans tend to learn better when music and movement are utilized.
- *Stylistic expressiveness* refers to the importance of expressing one's uniqueness; however, this individuality is usually a reflection of the person's connection to the group itself, and does not challenge the goals of the group.
- *Time as a social phenomenon* is in contrast to the dominant cultural belief that time is a material possession. According to the African worldview, time is anchored in social events; this is illustrated by the notion that among African Americans, an event begins when the first person arrives and ends when the last person leaves.
- *Positivity* is an inclination to see the good even in the direst of situations. This is reflected in the expression, "Making a way out of no way."

These aspects of the Africentric perspective contribute to the way African immigrant mothers think about parenting in the U.S. However it is not these beliefs alone that determine these immigrant mothers' ways of interacting with their children.

According to Berry's (1997) model, immigrant parents negotiate whether they maintain their cultural beliefs and identity from their culture of origin or not. However Tamis-LeMonda and colleagues' (2007) research asserts that immigrants' parental ethnotheories may be comprised of beliefs both from one's culture of origin and from U.S. society—or that parents can negotiate and hold seemingly conflicting cultural beliefs. In turn, the intention of the proposed study is to elucidate how immigrant parents' ideas and practices, in interaction with their children's ECCE program, become dynamic and inclusive of both the U.S. culture as well as the parents' cultures of origin.

Second dimension: Social capital. The second dimension of acculturation as defined by Berry (1997) consists of immigrants' interactions with the host culture or immigrants' processes of building social capital. As a widely discussed and debated construct, social capital, in a most general sense, refers to the benefits and resources that individuals, families, and groups receive from social relationships. Specifically, Coleman (1988) theorized about the importance of social capital or the relations among individuals as being beneficial to individuals, families, and ultimately societies. According to research based on Coleman's (1988) conceptualization of this construct, social capital is particularly important for disadvantaged families who have fewer resources (Runyan et al., 1998), as well as children who are considered at risk (Furstenburg Jr., & Hughes, 1995; Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1996).

Families reflect three types of capital, which are interrelated and all impact child outcomes: financial, human, and social (Coleman, 1988). Financial capital refers to financial resources or wealth of a family, while human capital includes personal characteristics, skills, and capabilities, including parents' education. Research indicates that social capital can buffer the possible risks of low financial and human capital among disadvantaged families (Coleman, 1988; Kawachi, 2000). Specifically, social capital results from the parent-child relationship *within* the family between parents and children, and from relationships *outside* the family including those relationships in the neighborhood and among various community organizations and particularly educational institutions, including ECCE.

According to Coleman (1988) there are three salient forms of social capital and each of these aspects of social capital have relevance for and can be used to understand the experiences of immigrant families (Kao, 2004), and particularly immigrant families in ECCE. First, inherent in any social structure are norms of reciprocity, or patterns of trust including obligations and expectations in which individuals in a network depend upon one another. For example, if neighbor A cares for neighbor B's child, in the future, neighbor A can expect neighbor B to care for her child. This resource of care is consistently available to both of these neighbors; however for families that are socially or culturally isolated this resource may not be available.

New immigrants may experience greater isolation from majority culture families but may have very intense, reciprocal relationships with other families from their cultures of origin (Kao, 2004). Putnam (as cited by Brettell, 2008) refers to this as the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to links

between individuals from a similar community or background, while bridging social capital is comprised of connections across communities or cultures. Developing both bonding and bridging social capital, or relationships among immigrant families from the same culture of origin and relationships between immigrants and non-immigrants, ultimately contributes to parents' experiences of acculturation to U.S. society. ECCE programs provide opportunities through parent policy councils and parent organizations, as well as meetings with teachers, and adult education classes to develop both bonding and bridging social capital, including relationships of trust, obligations, and expectations.

Second, information channels are another important aspect of social capital (Coleman, 1988). Specifically, individuals rely on relationships with others for certain types of knowledge; this is particularly true among parents who rely on other parents and teachers for information regarding the school system. Regardless of education levels, limited ability to understand English may impair immigrant parents' abilities to gather the necessary knowledge they need to navigate the American education system, ultimately impacting their children's success (Kao, 2004). For all families, but particularly for immigrant families, ECCE can provide necessary information to parents regarding how the public education system in the U.S. is organized, such that their children are set up for success prior to entering Kindergarten. Also, ECCE can provide parents with information regarding education for themselves to ultimately improve their own earnings and financial stability. Finally, ECCE can provide families with important health related knowledge including scheduling annual visits to the doctor, keeping immunizations current, good nutrition, mental wellness (Gupta et al., 2009), as well as medical services including dental (Obeng, 2008), vision, and hearing exams. All of these connections with

health care in ECCE often lead to better health outcomes as witnessed in Head Start programs throughout the U.S. (U.S. DHHS, 2005). However, very little research has been done specifically focusing on the health care experiences of immigrant families in ECCE.

Finally, Coleman (1988) discussed social norms and sanctions as important aspects of social capital that govern behavior among children, families, and society. Specifically, these refer to expected behavior among individuals in society, in which accepted behaviors are rewarded and unacceptable behaviors are sanctioned. In particular, as Coleman (1988) puts it, “Effective norms that inhibit crime make it possible to walk freely outside at night in a city and enable old persons to leave their houses without fear for their safety,” (p. S104). Norms can encourage behavior or discourage behavior. In ECCE programs this is reflected in the amount of encouragement parents receive to be involved with their children’s school. Additionally, parents are sanctioned with fines if they do not arrive to pick up their children on time at the end of the day. This may be something that immigrants from more disadvantaged backgrounds might experience more often than other families, particularly if the parents do not have reliable transportation or the parent has a non-traditional or changing work schedule and their hours of employment conflict with the ECCE center’s hours.

Strategies of acculturation. Berry (1997) proposes that from the perspective of the acculturating individual there are four acculturation strategies: integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalization. Additionally, these strategies generally lead to various types of adaptation or outcomes. *Integration*, the most common acculturation strategy, occurs when individuals maintain their cultural belief systems

from their cultures of origin while interacting in, developing social capital, and taking on aspects of the new culture. Researchers often consider this to be a very conscious selection process in terms of choosing which aspects of the culture of origin are maintained, while living in the new culture. Despite a historical focus on assimilation, integration is now a favored strategy of acculturation, as immigrants who are integrated or balanced in terms of their interactions with both the host culture and the culture of origin tend to have more positive mental health outcomes (Farver, Eppe, & Ballon, 2006). Additionally, research indicates that parents who are able to balance the values of both cultures, or to integrate, may be better able to navigate U.S. society, while maintaining important ties with their culture of origin (Harwood et al., 2003). Also, this acculturation strategy is associated with the most positive child and family outcomes (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Berry & Kim, 1988).

Despite the positive developmental outcomes associated with integration, Berry (1997) explains that integration can only be chosen by the individual as an acculturation strategy if the dominant culture is accepting of cultural diversity or if social inclusion is highly regarded. Portes and Zhou (1994) reinforce this idea with their discussion of segmented assimilation or why some groups of immigrants are more vulnerable to downward mobility than others, as the factors related to downward mobility are: skin color, location, and absence of mobility ladders. These three factors are in some way controlled by the host society and thus in many ways can determine the acculturation experiences of the immigrant. For example, the color of one's skin may mean different things in different cultures—for example, black immigrants arrive from Africa and experience racism for the first time in the U.S (Portes & Zhou, 1994). The

neighborhoods in which immigrants tend to settle are in close proximity to neighborhoods of native poor families; in turn, the larger population views these two groups as the same and responds to them as such, even though their needs and experiences may be very different. Finally, immigrants' access to "occupational ladders for intergenerational mobility," (Portes & Zhou, 1994, p. 23), are somewhat non-existent, as the manufacturing and personal services jobs typically available to immigrants do not have very much upward mobility in the contemporary economy. For all these reasons the experiences of integration may vary across different immigrant groups.

The second acculturation strategy, *assimilation*, is often not distinguished by researchers from integration. This strategy of acculturation is characterized by abandoning the culture of origin and fully taking on the values, beliefs, and practices of the new host culture. From the perspective of the dominant culture this is usually considered the melting pot strategy of acculturation (Berry, 2006). Those who promote this particular acculturation strategy tend to believe that a single approach for working with all families is best and that being "color blind", so as not to recognize differences in the needs of families from diverse backgrounds, is most appropriate.

A third type of acculturation strategy, *separation*, occurs when immigrants remain highly connected to their culture of origin and do not interact with the new culture—from the perspective of the dominant group this level of acculturation is considered segregation (Berry, 2006). Immigrants who are *marginalized* fall within the fourth acculturation strategy, and tend to have a low connection to both their culture of origin and the new culture. This occurs when individuals are forced to disconnect from their home culture by the dominant culture, and then for reasons of discrimination by the dominant culture

they experience *exclusion* from the new culture (Berry, 1997). These individuals and families are most at risk for adverse outcomes as they have limited access to resources in both their cultures of origin and the new host culture to buffer the challenges of living in a new culture. Research indicates that children of immigrant parents who are marginalized tend to have more psychological problems than their counterparts with integrated or assimilated parents (Farver, Eppe, & Ballon, 2006).

Ecocultural theory. A way to understand the experiences of immigrant parents as they negotiate parenting and navigate U.S. society with young children is to focus on families' daily routines and how cultural and ecological factors shape experiences. Specifically, ecocultural theory borrows from the ideas of social constructionism while utilizing an ecological approach, to better understand how cultural and ecological aspects of the context shape parents' experiences of rearing children across different cultures. Cultural aspects refer to shared beliefs, values, and practices related to child rearing, while ecological aspects of families' lives reflect social, institutional, and material resources (Lowe & Weisner, 2004). Weisner (1997) argues that ecocultural research related to children and families' development should be focused on multiple levels including: 1) the ecocultural context which includes institutions, family structures, demographic and epidemiologic patterns, that shape individuals' development; 2) beliefs, values, and ideas held by parents related to child rearing; and 3) the interactions that occur everyday or daily routines, shaping families' experiences.

Ecocultural theory provides a lens focused more specifically on developmental trajectories or individuals' "cultural careers," which shape individuals' identities and bring meaning to interactions (Weisner, 2002a, p. 325). Specifically, the theory

considers what these cultural careers are comprised of, shaped by, and how they are reflected in families' daily routines or every day interactions with cultural and ecological aspects of society. This theory purports the ideas that daily routines,

...crystallize culture directly in everyday experience because they include values and goals, resource needs to make the activity happen, people in relationships, the tasks the activity is there to accomplish, emotions and motives of those engaged in the activity, and a script defining the appropriate normative way to engage in that activity (Weisner, 2002b, p. 275).

Within each of these daily interactions individuals ascribe meaning to various situations based on cultural beliefs, which ultimately influences individuals' developmental experiences (Weisner, 2002b). Overall, ecocultural theory provides unique insight into how both culture and context shape parents ideas and practices as reflected in the every day experiences of parents and children.

Early Childhood Care and Education and Immigrant Families

Defining ECCE. In the proposed study ECCE consists of and is defined as early childhood developmental and educational (Cochran, 2007) care programs and providers. However recent literature and research distinguishes some ECCE programs as being high quality, as these programs have the most positive impacts on children (NICHD, 2006). Thus, according to the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the national accrediting body for early childhood programs in the U.S., *high quality* ECCE refers specifically to, those programs that include, “a developmentally appropriate curriculum; knowledgeable and well-trained program staff and educators; and comprehensive services that support their [children’s] health, nutrition, and social well-

being, in an environment that respects and supports diversity,” (NAEYC, n.d.). As such when high quality is attached to the term ECCE throughout this document it refers to the aforementioned definition outlined by NAEYC, when it is not utilized, ECCE refers to the previously stated basic definition.

ECCE selection & utilization among immigrant families. According to Child Trends Databank (2005), 61% of all U.S. children under age six were in some type of non-parental care in 2005. In light of the continuous rise in child care use among all U.S. families throughout the last few decades and particularly since welfare reform, a number of studies have been conducted to better understand parents’ use of child care (Capizzano, Adams & Sonenstein, 2000; Fuller, et al., 2000; Kisker, Hofferth, Phillips & Farquar, 1991) and the impact of this care on children’s development (Burchinal, Ramey, Reid & Jaccard, 1995; Caughy, DePeitro & Strobino, 1994; Howes, 1999). Specifically, research indicates that immigrant children between the ages of three and five were less likely than native born children to be in non-parental care (57% versus 71% of children with native-born parents) (Matthews & Ewen, 2006b). However, among immigrant children ages three to five with employed parents, 73% were in child care (compared to 82% of children of U.S.-born parents), and those in child care were more likely to be in center-based care than in any other type of care (Matthews & Ewen, 2006b). Research utilizing the nationally representative ECLS-K dataset conducted by Magnuson, Lahaie, and Waldfogel (2006) found that among immigrant children in the year prior to Kindergarten: 46% attended preschool (63% among children of native born parents) and 12% attended Head Start (10% of children with native born parents). In

other words, at least 58% of immigrant children were in an ECCE setting in the year prior to Kindergarten.

A small body of research indicates that when considering ECCE for their children, parents not only think about quality of care, but also cost and convenience (Peyton, Jacobs, O'Brien, & Roy, 2001). Research indicates that the number of children being cared for at the same time, location, whether the provider speaks English, and whether or not care is provided at a reasonable cost are all important characteristics that parents consider as they select child care (Hofferth, Shauman, Henke, & West, 1998). More recent research shows a link between parental characteristics and the aspects of child care that parents think are most important in their selection process (Kim & Fram, 2009). Specifically, highly educated, wealthy parents who have preschool age children indicate that a program of high quality, and focused on learning and child development are of the utmost importance (Kim & Fram, 2009). However, among parents of a lower SES, who were employed outside the home, logistical issues including, location, cost, and hours of operation were most important as they selected care for their children (Kim & Fram, 2009). Other research shows that low-income parents' cultural values and beliefs play into their selection of care for their children (Fuller, Holloway, Rambaud, & Eggers-Pierola, 1996). Despite this research, much of it is quantitative and focused on non-immigrant populations.

Few studies have focused specifically on the factors that contribute to low-income, *immigrant* mothers' selection and use of non-parental ECCE or the process mothers use to navigate the ECCE system as they select care for their children. Increased understanding of ECCE selection and utilization dynamics among low-income

immigrants is important given that the quality of early child care is linked to children's cognitive and socioemotional readiness to enter Kindergarten. Some immigrant children who have not attended high quality ECCE enter school less ready than their counterparts who have attended high quality ECCE (Magnuson, Lahaie & Waldfogel, 2006).

Cultural characteristics indicating preference for care by family members are often cited as reasons that immigrant families utilize formal early childhood programs at lower rates than their native counterparts. However, recent research indicates that these enrollment gaps may be most closely related to structural (affordability, accessibility) reasons rather than cultural preferences (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). In addition, recent work on social exclusion that moves beyond solely considering socioeconomics, and considers how immigrant families lack access to a variety of institutions, sheds light on the structural barriers including language, financial, and geographic barriers that immigrant families face when in search of services and support (Yoshikawa, Godfrey, & Rivera, 2008).

Research shows that certain familial characteristics (maternal employment, marital status, income, language, and parental education) as well as neighborhood characteristics are related to the likelihood of children's participation in ECCE (National Institute for Early Education Research as cited by Matthews & Ewen, 2006b). Immigrant families in which parents are married are less likely to include a mother who is employed, which in turn decreases the likelihood of ECCE utilization. Among immigrant parents in the U.S. their likelihood of being married is greater than among native-born parents, and mothers in immigrant families tend to engage in work outside the home at lower rates than among native-born families (Hernandez, 2009), leading to higher rates of poverty among

immigrant families and an inability to afford ECCE (Matthews & Ewen, 2006b). In other words, in immigrant families in which mothers are not working, ECCE is not *needed* for care purposes and is not *affordable* enough for enrichment purposes. Parents' language abilities influence their selection of ECCE for their children; if there are no ECCE programs available with bilingual teachers, this limitation may deter parents from enrolling their children in ECCE. However, recent work in the U.S. indicates that structural barriers related to families' socioeconomic status account for the majority of the gap in terms of preschool enrollment among immigrants in the U.S. (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). Additionally, in the U.S. the National Task Force on Early Childhood Education of Hispanics (2007) found that in various Latino neighborhoods in California and Chicago there was a shortage of ECCE programs available. Limited geographic and financial accessibility is increasingly being considered by researchers as the most common reasons immigrant families are attending ECCE programs at lower rates than non-immigrant children, rather than reasons based on parents' values and beliefs (Hernandez, Denton, Macartney, 2007).

Developmental outcomes related to ECCE. Much of the research on ECCE relates to the ways high quality programs impact children's developmental outcomes. Specifically, engaging in high quality ECCE is associated with positive cognitive (reading, math, and language skills) and socioemotional developmental outcomes for children. The National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) Study of Early Child Care and Youth Development (SECCYD) found that children who were in higher quality, non-maternal child care during their first four to five years of life had greater cognitive and social skills than their age-mate peers who were in lower

quality non-maternal care (NICHD, 2006). Higher quality care predicted school readiness, based on standardized reading and math scores at age four and a half (NICHD, 2006). In another study utilizing a low-income sample comprised of 32% Latinos, Loeb and colleagues (2004) found that children who were in center-based care between 24 and 48 months were cognitively and socially more prepared for Kindergarten than their counterparts who did not attend center-based care.

Data from the 1998 Kindergarten cohort of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (ECLS-K) found that among *immigrant* children, preschool attendance was associated with greater reading and math skills in Kindergarten (Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006). Additionally, results from a study of universal pre-Kindergarten in Oklahoma indicated better cognitive developmental outcomes for Latino children who attended pre-K than their ethnic-racial counterparts who did not attend preschool (Gormley, 2008). Finally, results from NICHD's SECCYD indicate that children's socio-emotional development was related to their participation in high quality ECCE. Specifically, children who were in high quality ECCE exhibited: secure attachment, cooperation and compliance, while being less aggressive and disobedient (NICHD, 2006). Loeb and colleagues (2004) found that children who were cared for by someone with less than a high school degree tended to exhibit a greater amount of social-behavior problems. Related research indicates that a link between time in care and behavior problems only emerges when the child is in low quality care, and that the likelihood of displaying behavior problems actually decreases with more hours in high quality care (Votruba-Drzal, Coley, & Chase-Lansdale, 2004).

Multiple studies indicate the importance of high quality ECCE for language development. Results from NICHD's SECCYD indicate that the language utilized by the care provider or teacher was significantly associated with language development, which is also supported by Magnuson, Lahaie, and Waldfogel's (2006) findings that preschool attendance is associated with a higher likelihood of passing an English-language proficiency screening during Kindergarten among immigrant children. Gormley (2008) found in his study of universal pre-K in Oklahoma that children in high quality pre-K showed greater increases in language development than other Latino children in lower quality care. Overall, research indicates that preschool may be even more beneficial for immigrant children (Gormley, 2008) whose parents do not speak English at home (Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006). These results are particularly important since 14% of immigrant children's parents speak only English at home and only 26 % are fluent in English (Hernandez, 2009). Together these findings indicate that it is important for immigrant children to be in high quality ECCE such that they are exposed to the language skills of other providers to improve not only their language development but also school readiness, and their ability to integrate into U.S. society (Hernandez, 2004; Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). Considering the demographic characteristics of immigrant families, which indicate hardship particularly in relation to education, health, and financial stability, as well as the importance of these areas for immigrant children's overall well-being (Takanishi, 2004) coupled with immigrant families growing use of ECCE, it is important to understand how ECCE as an institution supports immigrant families in their acculturation to U.S. society, particularly in relation to the domains of health, education, and financial stability.

Functions of ECCE. According to Vandebroek (2006) ECCE serves multiple functions in society. These can be grouped into three broad categories: economic, educational, and social functions. Specifically, the *economic* function of ECCE is to provide care for children such that parents can be employed and in turn, economically secure. The *educational* function of ECCE is to provide children with developmental opportunities necessary for cognitive and socio-emotional development, important for later educational success; this includes much of what was highlighted in the previous section. Finally, and generally least thought of and least researched, the *social* function of child care programs refers to the utilization of ECCE to acculturate diverse, marginalized groups into society (Vandebroek, 2006). There is very limited research on the social function of ECCE for immigrant families, particularly as it relates to how these institutions contribute to immigrant families' development of social capital and reduction of disadvantage, as well as immigrant parents' ethnotheories.

Based on research from Europe (see Fukkink, 2008; Vandebroek, 2006) the social function of ECCE refers to the ways that these programs contribute to integrating diverse groups of individuals into society. ECCE environments are considered a place where children can learn how to interact in a multicultural society through their experiences with other children from diverse backgrounds. In addition, ECCE teachers can be integral in supporting parents' cultural beliefs (Fukkink, 2008). Based on Small's (2009) recent work focused on parents using child care centers in New York City, ECCE programs can be a hub for building and expanding social relationships and networks among parents. Small (2009) found that parents were able to expand their social networks in ECCE programs that provided institutional support for this process, including

having parent-teacher organizations, the arrangement of drop-off and pick-up, as well as the frequency of field trips. Parents' enrollment in ECCE and their development of social relationships, and consequently, social capital led to improved well-being among these parents (Small, 2009). Given this, this study extended Vandebroek's (2006) and Fukkink's (2008) research to move beyond solely focusing on societal functions of ECCE and consider the social function for families that ECCE play. Additionally, this study used Small's (2009) work, which focused on the social relationships that native born parents gain from their children's ECCE programs, as a springboard to explore how this happens among immigrant families, specifically, and to understand the other aspects of social capital that ECCE programs may help parents develop.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the present study was to provide more insight into the dynamic experiences of low-income immigrant mothers as they adjust to life in a new host society, negotiate parenting in the U.S., and learn how to navigate and utilize the ECCE system to support their parenting. This study also aims to add to the limited research on the social function of ECCE by understanding how immigrant mothers use ECCE programs to build social capital. Specifically, this study moves beyond previous studies of immigrant families in a couple distinct ways. First, study focuses on the ECCE experiences of parents rather than children. Previous research has focused specifically on children and their outcomes from being involved with ECCE. This work is important and has provided researchers, practitioners, and legislators with important insight into the necessary supports for the development of low-income immigrant children. Second, much of the work focused on immigrant families with children is quantitative, and

specifically very demographically focused. This qualitative study builds on the wealth of previous quantitative research on immigrant children, to understand some of the processes related to being a mother in the U.S. following immigration, including negotiating parenting beliefs and navigating U.S. child-and family-related systems. Finally, this study extends several important areas of research: 1) process of negotiating parenting ideas and practices in a new host culture; 2) ECCE decision-making, which as a field we do not completely understand among non-immigrant families, and we know even less among immigrants; and, 3) development of social capital among immigrant mothers in ECCE programs. Consequently, grounded in ecocultural theory, the study explores the following research questions:

How do low-income immigrant mothers navigate and negotiate U.S. society with young children? Specifically,

- How do these mothers' experiences in their countries of origin, as well as their immigration experiences and adjustment to the U.S. shape their expectations of parenting in a new host society?
- How do low-income immigrant mothers negotiate their ideas and practices related to parenting as they adjust to living in the U.S.?
- How do low-income immigrant mothers navigate the U.S. early childhood care and education system?
- How do these mothers use early childhood care and education programs to build more social capital?

Chapter 3: Design and Methodology

Methodological Approach

The goal of this study was to gain greater understanding of the lived experiences of immigrant mothers of young children as they parented in the U.S. and in interaction with the ECCE system. This study was guided by the beliefs, habits, and tools of (Masterman, 1970 as cited in Daly, 2007) social constructionism. A constructivist notion of meaning making through social interactions aligns with concepts associated with ecocultural theory, including how individuals' roles and identities are shaped through daily interactions. Specifically, the methods for this research were rooted in the notion that there is not one singular reality, but rather multiple perceptions of realities that are constructed through social interactions, and filtered through one's mind as well as processes of the external world. In this meaning-making process, individuals' prior experiences, their understanding of the current interactions, as well as the researchers' perspective all contribute to the co-construction of multiple realities (Daly, 2007). Utilizing a social constructionism paradigm, this research is most closely aligned with the subjectivist end of an epistemological continuum in that it is based on an underlying assumption that there can be different interpretations and explanations of reality.

In line with social constructionism, a qualitative approach was utilized in terms of data collection and analyses. Unlike quantitative methodologies, rooted in notions of positivism, qualitative methodologies provided data on how and why certain phenomena occur. Specifically, in-depth interviews and observations provided rich insight into the contexts of immigrant mothers' lives, the processes of negotiating parenting in the U.S.

as well as navigating the ECCE system, and the meaning that these mothers ascribed to their interactions, roles, and identities related to parenting in the U.S.

Similar to previous work grounded in ecocultural theory, this study used aspects of ethnography, including field observations and in-depth interviews to understand the experiences of immigrant mothers of young children in the U.S. Ethnographic methods are important tools for exploring how culture impacts individuals' experiences, as they "are centrally concerned with the adaptive projects of individuals and communities—that is, with what they are trying to accomplish to meet their goals in their cultural world," (Weisner, 1997, p. 177).

Field sites and sample recruitment. After receiving IRB approval from the University of Maryland, recruitment efforts commenced. Prior to each interview participants were required to read and sign an informed consent form (See Appendices A and B). Participants were informed verbally and in writing that their interview would be audio recorded. In addition, participants were made aware that they could ask questions about the study before, during, and after the interview, as well as discontinue the interview and/or withdraw from the study at any time. Each participant received a copy of the consent form to keep for their records.

Mothers were recruited to participate in this study from three ECCE programs in the DC metro area in which a high percentage (over 70%) of immigrant families, from a variety of countries of origin were enrolled. These sites were part of a larger study conducted by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in which the student researcher was involved. The NAEYC project focused on how high quality, ECCE programs serve immigrant children (ages 3-5) and their families, with a

large emphasis on strategies, tools, and techniques that programs used to engage immigrant children and parents successfully in ECCE programs, such that other ECCE programs could utilize this information to work successfully with immigrant families (see Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011). Multiple abbreviated case studies, including classroom observations and interviews with teachers and staff, of ECCE programs were conducted in the U.S. and abroad. The NAEYC project was focused more specifically on what was happening in the classroom, including child-teacher, child-child, and parent-teacher interactions, and how ECCE programs were working with immigrant families. In contrast, the present study aimed to understand more about *mothers'* experiences, and specifically how their interactions with ECCE programs shaped their acculturation experiences.

Sample stratification. This study focused on mothers who were immigrants embedded within particular households as the units of analysis. Previous research indicates that circumstances surrounding and reasons for immigration tend to vary among families. As indicated by various migrant categories including: temporary labor migrants; highly skilled and business migrants; refugees; forced migration; and family reunification families migrate for a variety of reasons (OECD, 2006). Additionally, the reasons that families migrate are often tied to the political, historical, social, and economic conditions in families' countries of origin. For example during the civil wars in Guatemala and El Salvador numerous immigrants fled to the U.S. as refugees and asylees. Additionally, immigrants from the same countries and regions of origin tend to have similar levels of human capital (Portes & Rumbaut, 2006) In other words families' from similar countries of origin tend to have similar reasons for migrating, as well as

resources related to education and labor skills following migration. Together these characteristics, reasons for migrating and levels of human capital, impact parents' resources for and experiences of raising their children in a new culture. In addition to families' reasons for migrating, families' timing of immigration or how long the family has been living in the U.S., which is often used as a proxy for level of acculturation, may also shape parenting in immigrant families. In other words parents who are in the U.S. longer tend to have parenting experiences that look more similar to one another than to parents who are newly arrived in the U.S.

Given this potential diversity of experiences which is linked to regions of origin and timing of immigration, the sample in the current study was stratified based on these characteristics such that diversity regarding these characteristics is captured. Despite recruiting mothers whose families were from the same region of origin and who were in the U.S. the same amount of time, these families were different. Specifically, there was variation in who was included in these households over time, and whether the mother was part of a couple relationship or not. However, focusing specifically on immigrant mothers, who were embedded within a particular household as the units of analysis, regardless of how these households changed over time, helped manage this potential diversity. To capture diversity in relation to region of origin and timing of immigration in the sample for this study, immigrant mothers were recruited from three separate field sites because these sites provided access to mothers from different regions of origin (Central and South America, Northern Africa, and the Middle East), as well as immigrants who were in the U.S. for varying amounts of time.

Field sites. Through a larger NAEYC project (see Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011), field sites were identified. However, the sample for the study was not related to the overall goals of the NAEYC project. Mothers were recruited from three programs in different geographic areas in the DC metro region because this number of sites provided access to families from different countries of origin and given the numbers of families at each site this also ensured the ability to recruit enough participants. Additionally, utilizing three sites helped increase the diversity of the sample to provide insight into parenting experiences across different immigrant groups currently living in the DC metro area of the U.S.

The River Banks Program¹ was founded 1945 and is located in Spring Valley, a medium-sized city in Northern Virginia, just west of Washington, DC. It provided comprehensive services for children of all ages with the goals of preparing children for school and ensuring children's success throughout their educational careers from pre-Kindergarten through high school. The early childhood education component of River Banks included an early learning center, Virginia pre-kindergarten initiative classrooms, as well as Early Head Start and Head Start programs. Immigrant families were recruited from the Head Start classrooms because these classes included a high number of immigrant families, as well as children who were four years old, and consequently would be transitioning to Kindergarten within one to two years.

For 43 years River Banks was the delegate agency receiving Spring Valley's Head Start funds providing early childhood education programs to low-income families. At the time of the study there were 15 Head Start classrooms serving over 270 children in

¹All the names of participants and organizations involved in this study were changed to protect the privacy of study participants and program staff

multiple sites throughout Spring Valley. Field work was conducted at one Head Start site on the west side of Spring Valley, which included three classrooms (approximately 50 children) located within an elementary school. In the last five to seven years, the racial-ethnic demographics of the west side shifted due to an influx of immigrants, such that the community went from being comprised of mostly African Americans and Latino families to the majority of families being from African (Egypt, Morocco, Ethiopia, Eritrea) and Middle Eastern countries (Pakistan and Afghanistan). The children and families enrolled in these three Head Start classrooms reflected these demographic shifts with the majority being from Africa, the Middle East, and a few Latin American and African American families. In addition, 85% of these families fell below 100% of the federal poverty line.

The second field site, La Casita del Saber (The Little House of Wisdom), was founded in 1986 by a community of low-income parents who were committed to their children receiving a high quality, bilingual, multicultural early childhood education. La Casita, a multisite program, was originally established in the Columbia Heights neighborhood of Washington, DC and was comprised of programs for children, youth, and families, serving over 1500 families. At the time of the study, the majority of residents in Columbia Heights were African Americans. However one third of the neighborhood was comprised of Latino families, the greatest concentration of Latinos in all of DC. Despite this, with the rising cost of living many of the poorest and most recent arrivals from Latin America were moving to less expensive areas in northeast Washington, DC and Maryland. Additionally, there were more African and Middle Eastern families moving into the area. The families served by La Casita seemed to reflect these demographic transitions in that families served by the program at the time of the

study were Latin American, African American, and African. Within La Casita, children and families in the universal pre-Kindergarten pilot program, which was in its fifth year, were observed. This pilot program was comprised of five classrooms housed in a bilingual charter school. Specifically, parents were recruited from the classroom with the oldest children who would be attending Kindergarten the following fall. There were 17 children in this classroom.

The third field site was Time of Wonder, which was located in the western part of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, DC. At the time of the study, the neighborhood was fairly diverse in terms of social class as well as race-ethnicity. Specifically, there were African American, Latino, and white European families from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds living in this area. Under a different name, Time of Wonder began in 1911 as a home to unwed mothers. In 1971 it was renovated—bedrooms were turned into classrooms—to become a child care program for neighborhood families who were primarily Latino and Caucasian. During the mid-1980's Time of Wonder received a Head Start grant to provide early childhood education, and it was during this time that the number of Latino families increased, and more African American families began utilizing Time of Wonder. Additionally during this time, DC provided funding that supplemented low-income families, and particularly those families who did not qualify for Head Start, but could not afford high quality ECCE on their own.

At the time of the study, Time of Wonder continued to serve neighborhood families, and there continued to be three types of slots at Time of Wonder: federally funded through Head Start, subsidized by the DC government, and paid for privately by families. Consequently, 70% of the families at Time of Wonder were low-income, and

approximately 70% were Latino. However, with more and more African immigrants beginning to live in the Columbia Heights and Mount Pleasant neighborhoods the diversity of families at Time of Wonder was beginning to reflect these neighborhood demographic changes. At Time of Wonder mothers, of children from the two oldest classrooms in the center which included 15 children each, were recruited.

Sample recruitment strategies. From the three aforementioned centers 41 low-income, immigrant mothers were recruited to participate in this study. Despite a focus on recruiting mothers given their roles as primary caregivers of young children, there were some fathers (n=4) who also participated in interviews or part of interviews with the mothers. Inclusion criteria for this study were: being a mother of a child who was enrolled in one of the ECCE programs mentioned above; having children who would begin Kindergarten between fall 2009² and fall 2011; and, being a first generation immigrant (ie: the mother was born outside of the U.S.). These eligibility criteria allowed for purposive sampling or asking certain immigrant mothers to participate because they are “information rich,” (Patton, 2002) to occur. Interviewing mothers ceased when saturation, or no longer hearing new information, themes, or stories regarding mothers’ experiences, was reached.

Participants were recruited in a variety of ways including: volunteering in the children’s classrooms, particularly during the time that children were being either picked up or dropped off; accompanying family service workers on home visits during the beginning of the school year; finally, visiting parent gatherings associated with the centers to tell parents about the study and determine their levels of interest in the project. Mothers were recruited at Time of Wonder through another focus group research project

² One mother recruited for the study already had her daughter in Kindergarten.

offered at the center. In addition, mothers at Time of Wonder were recruited as they signed their children in and out of the program (See Table 1).

Sample description. The sample for this study consisted of 41 first-generation immigrant mothers. All of the parents were enrolled in one of the three field sites (La Casita del Saber, River Banks, and Time of Wonder), which were funded by Head Start or the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF). Nineteen of these mothers hailed from various African countries (Ethiopia, n=8; Ghana, n=5; Sudan, n=2; Egypt, n=1; Morocco, n=1, Somalia, n=1) and 22 were from Latin American countries (El Salvador, n=10; Mexico, n=7; Guatemala, n=2; Argentina, n=1; Dominican Republic, n=1; Ecuador, n=1), and migrated to the U.S. nine years (min.= 2; max.= 21) before they were interviewed for this study, on average. Mothers were 32.1 years old (min. = 21; max. = 46), and had two children (min.= 1; max.= 4), on average. For 22 mothers this was their first child. Six mothers still had children living in their COOs.

Data collection. This study adhered to the five principles of grounded theory laid out by LaRossa (2005) including: 1) language being central to social life and thus the importance of analyzing written texts including field notes and transcribed interviews; 2) words as indicators of theory; 3) coding by classifying and categorizing concepts as a means to theorizing; 4) considering theory to be a series of interrelated concepts and categories that help make sense of a specific phenomenon; and 5) selecting a central variable.

Grounded theory, as outlined by Glaser and Strauss (Daly, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1990), is a qualitative approach that encourages researchers to allow themes and new theories to emerge from the data without the confines of predetermined ideas or

theories regarding the population of interest. Despite the usefulness of this technique, a *modified* grounded theory approach was utilized, which allowed for consideration of ideas and theories from prior studies that informed and guided the goals and analyses of this study. This approach required starting with a theoretical perspective, in this case ecocultural and acculturation frameworks served as guides in terms of data collection and analyses. Specifically, sensitizing concepts or guiding ideas from these frameworks guided the development of the interview protocol as well as the earliest phases of data analysis (Van den Hoonaard, 1997).

Table 1: Recruitment Sources

| Source | Type of Recruitment | # of participants |
|---------------------|---|-------------------|
| | • home visits | |
| River Banks Program | • in classroom (pick-up, drop-off) • parent meetings | 24 participants |
| La Casita del Saber | • in classroom (pick-up, drop-off) • parent meetings | 7 participants |
| Time of Wonder | • at center • focus groups | 10 participants |

According to Masterman’s (1970 as cited in Daly, 2007) construction of paradigm, to collect data about the experiences of immigrant mothers’ with young children in ECCE in the United States, “tools” in line with social constructionism were used. Specifically, field observations in the classrooms, ECCE-related meetings and programs, as well as in mothers’ homes during interviews, focusing on interactions

between parents and ECCE staff, parents and children, and parents with other parents, were collected. Also, in-depth interviews with mothers were conducted to understand mothers' experiences of parenting in the U.S., as they interacted with their children's ECCE programs and providers. In-depth interviews were the primary data source for this study.

Field observations. I spent one day a week at River Banks Programs and La Casita del Saber as a participant observer. At Time of Wonder I observed and spent time at the center during pick up and drop off every couple of weeks to meet and recruit parents, and I spent time observing in some of the pre-Kindergarten classrooms a few times during data collection. As a participant observer I was able to get to know the teachers, staff, children, and their families such that recruitment of mothers from these classrooms was less complicated. In addition, being in the classrooms allowed me to observe interactions between parents and the program; these observations provided additional insight into immigrant mothers' experiences. I paid particular attention to pick up and drop off, as well as other occasions on a day-to-day basis for observing parent-teacher and parent-child interactions, including parent-teacher conferences, and other parent meetings. While onsite or observing families in their daily routines, including during the in-depth interview, I jotted field notes based on my observations of behaviors, interactions, and discussions related to parents' and children's experiences. In addition I made notes regarding my personal reflections. Using Emerson et al.'s (1997) techniques for writing up field notes, each night after observing I converted my jottings to longer notes using Microsoft Word.

In-depth interviews. In the narrative tradition of social constructionism (Daly, 2007), in-depth interviews with immigrant parents of young children who attended one of the three aforementioned ECCE programs, were conducted. Unlike quantitative research in which sample sizes are determined by confidence intervals, for qualitative studies, sample size is a bit more flexible and is dependent upon saturation, or the point at which there is no new conceptual and theoretical information being gleaned from each interview (Daly, 2007). There are various estimates of the number of interviews necessary to achieve saturation, which range from 15 (Katherine Allen, personal communication) to 20 (Daly, 2007) to 30 (Isaac & Michael, 1981). Because I recruited from three distinct centers with diverse immigrant populations it was necessary to conduct more than 30 interviews such that saturation could be reached. Specifically, I collected data from 41 families, 22 of these families were Latin American and 19 were African. I stopped conducting interviews when I reached saturation within each of these large, regional ethnic groups.

The majority of interviews were conducted with mothers, as mothers, particularly in the two large cultural groups studied, were the primary caretakers. However four fathers (two Latino and two African), whose data were not included separately in the analyses for this project, participated in all or part of the interviews. The majority of interviews were conducted in parents' homes; while seven interviews were conducted at the ECCE programs due to convenience for the parent. All of the interviews were digitally audio-recorded. The interviews focused on the following areas: demographic background (age, number of children, marital status, household data, country of origin) and immigration experiences, daily routines, ECCE history, parenting beliefs, parents'

ideas and interactions related to education, health care, and financial stability, social support, ideas about the future, and advice to other immigrants. The analyses for this dissertation did not utilize data conducted on education, health care, and financial stability. These data will be analyzed in future projects. See Appendix C for the full interview protocol. Interviews lasted for one to three hours, with the average interview lasting approximately two hours.

All of the African parents were interviewed in English, and the Latinos were interviewed in Spanish with the assistance of undergraduate research assistants (UGRA) who were bilingual and bicultural. Specifically, one UGRA was born in the U.S., grew up in El Salvador from the age of a few months until the age of 13, then migrated to the U.S. and is completing college here. The other two UGRA's were second generation immigrants. Specifically, they were born and raised in the U.S. by parents who were originally from El Salvador. These research assistants were translators of language and culture during interviews, and were often able to quickly build rapport with participants, particularly with mothers from Time of Wonder who knew me less well because I spent fewer hours each week at this center. Following the interviews they transcribed the interviews in Spanish, and then translated these to English for analyses. The UGRA's randomly checked each others' transcriptions and translations for accuracy.

Data analyses. Throughout the data collection process I was engaged in memo-writing and began to make connections among concepts as they emerged from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Utilizing a modified grounded theory approach, formal data analyses were divided into three phases: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (LaRossa, 2005). Field notes and transcribed interviews were loaded into Atlas.ti, a software

program designed to assist qualitative researchers with data management. Specifically, Atlas.ti was used to help manage the data during open coding, in which I read each interview and field note and began coding using both sensitizing concepts (Van den Hoonaard, 1997) as well as concepts that emerged from the data (LaRossa, 2005). The sensitizing concepts I began with, which were related to ecocultural theory and my research questions were: demographic information, immigration experiences, ECCE history and experiences, ECCE social connections, parenting beliefs, and daily routine. A constant comparison method was used throughout open coding, such that paragraphs of text were read and then compared with previous blocks of text to determine if it was indicator of an existing category or if a new category needed to be created. This aspect of the analyses yielded additional codes, including ECCE challenges, social capital gains, nostalgia for COO, couple relationship, employment, documentation, parenting supports, racist thoughts and discrimination experiences. Open coding yielded 41 codes, ultimately a smaller subset of these were used for the analyses reported in this document.

During the second phase of analyses, axial coding, each of the salient categories or codes that emerged during open coding were examined by looking across cases to understand the various dimensions of each category (LaRossa, 2005). For example, to fully understand the dynamics of mothers' experiences with the ECCE system, all of the coded text for this code was compiled using Atlas.ti. Next, all the pieces of text related to "ECCE history and experiences" were read to understand and code for the various dimensions of each category. Ultimately, what emerged from this phase of coding in relation to this one code were the dynamics of how mothers selected ECCE for their children, including additional codes like, "reasons for looking for ECCE", "connections

to ECCE”, “obstacles to securing ECCE”, and “ECCE experiences”. Finally, during selective coding, the last phase of analyses for this study, the main “story underlying the analysis” (LaRossa, 2005, p. 850) emerged reflecting various facets of immigrant mothers’ parenting experiences and interactions with their children’s ECCE programs. Specifically, from the initial code, “ECCE history and experiences” a process model of how immigrant mothers navigated the ECCE system emerged.

Data quality. A widely referenced model for trustworthiness in research consists of characteristics that are associated with higher quality studies (Guba, 1981 as cited by Krefting, 1999). Specifically these components of trustworthiness identified by Guba (1981) include: truth value, applicability, consistency, and neutrality. Additionally, Guba’s model (1981) identifies the strategies for ensuring these aspects of quality in both quantitative and qualitative research. See Table 2 for the terminology used for each criterion in qualitative and quantitative research, and for the strategies that were employed in this study to ensure these four criteria were met.

Truth value. This refers to the level of confidence in, or how plausible the findings are based on the design of the study, the participants and the context. In quantitative research this is determined by considering the internal validity of the study or the strategies that were utilized to ensure the changes observed in the dependent variable of interest are accounted for by changes in the independent variable. Additionally, truth value in quantitative research is based on the notion that there is one specific reality to be measured. Alternatively, epistemological assumptions of qualitative research include the idea that there are multiple realities defined by various participants (Krefting, 1999). Consequently, qualitative researchers need to accurately reflect these realities such that

those who, “share that experience would immediately recognize the descriptions,” (Krefting, 1999, p. 174). In qualitative research this is referred to as *credibility*, rather than internal validity as in quantitative research.

Table 2: Criteria of Trustworthiness in Research (adapted from Krefting, 1999)

| Criteria | Qualitative Approach | Quantitative Approach | Strategies Employed in this Study |
|---------------|----------------------|-----------------------|--|
| | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prolonged time in the field |
| Truth value | Credibility | Internal validity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation • Peer examination • Reflexivity |
| Applicability | Transferability | External validity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thick description • Thick description |
| Consistency | Dependability | Reliability | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation • Peer examination |
| Neutrality | Confirmability | Objectivity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Triangulation • Reflexivity |

Applicability. This aspect of trustworthiness refers to how well the findings can be generalized to other contexts and individuals outside the study, or what is called external validity in quantitative research. This is not necessarily a goal of qualitative research as the focus is on the uniqueness of individuals’ situations through obtaining thick descriptions of individuals’ experiences (Krefting, 1999). Thus, in qualitative

research applicability is referred to as transferability, or how well the findings can be applied to another context that is similar to the context of the original research. Lincoln and Guba (1985) indicate that to ensure future researchers are able to apply qualitative findings to a larger or different context it is incumbent upon researchers to provide rich descriptive data (Krefting, 1999).

Consistency. This refers to the repeatability of findings if the study were replicated in a comparable context. In other words, study findings remain the same across subsequent studies. In quantitative research this is referred to as reliability, and is generally based on assuming the existence of a single reality. Generally, reliability is ensured by well controlled, tight research designs. However, in qualitative research, with the assumption of multiple realities as well as the focus on, “learning from the informants rather than controlling for them” (Krefting, 1999, p. 175), observing the breadth of variation in participants’ realities and experiences is desired. Consistency in qualitative research is referred to as dependability or being able to explain and account for the variation observed across participants. Given that the goal of qualitative research is to understand the varied dynamics of participants’ experiences, rather than trying to ascertain the average experience as in quantitative research, including participants’ experiences that are somewhat atypical or those who might be considered an outlier in quantitative research are extremely important in qualitative research in terms of elucidating the multiple facets of certain phenomena (Krefting, 1999).

Neutrality. Producing bias-free findings is a goal of research, and is reflected in objectivity in quantitative research. This refers to study findings being free from the influence of researcher bias or poor instrumentation. In other words, “the objective

researcher is seen as scientifically distant, that is, as someone who is not influenced by, and does not influence the study,” (Krefting, 1999, p. 175). In qualitative research, forging working relationships with participants was necessary to gain trust and in turn, the ability to collect rich data from participants. Consequently, examining the neutrality of the data, as determined by the study’s applicability, was considered to be paramount rather than the neutrality of the researcher, which is most important in quantitative research. Neutrality in qualitative studies is referred to as confirmability (Krefting, 1999).

Strategies. Specific strategies were employed in this study to increase credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, including lengthy field experience and rich, thick descriptions of these experiences, triangulation, peer examination, and reflexivity (Krefting, 1999).

Approximately seven months were spent in the field, in interaction with immigrant parents in ECCE programs as well as their homes. This extended engagement in the field enabled me to become familiar and trusted among mothers, as well as observe their experiences over this period of time. I kept detailed field notes while observing interactions between parents and teachers in the ECCE programs, as well as before and after interviews, and I digitally recorded parents during the interviews. Through detailed field notes, and audio recorded interviews, in which I was able to gather quotations from mothers regarding their ideas and experiences provided thick description necessary for trustworthiness in qualitative research. Specifically, utilizing mothers’ words offered direct evidence of participants’ lived experiences, which added to the credibility, transferability, and dependability of this study (Krefting, 1999).

Various methods of triangulation were employed to ensure data quality, and in turn, trustworthiness regarding the findings for this study. First, triangulation of data sources and methods was made certain by utilizing multiple data sources and methods, including field observations of parents, children, and staff, as well as conducting in-depth interviews with parents. Second, triangulation of investigators was a part of this study. The UGRA's who assisted in translating the interviews with the parents also helped interpret these interview and observation data from a cultural perspective. Also, I regularly met with the UGRA's about the field observations and asked for their interpretations of what I was seeing. Together these varied methods of triangulation increased the credibility, dependability, and confirmability of this study, and in turn, helped to tell a more complete story about the experiences of these immigrant parents with young children in ECCE.

I engaged in peer examination with several of my colleagues a few times during the course of data collection and analyses. We discussed what was being observed at each of the field sites and during the interviews with the parents, as well as how I was interpreting what I was seeing and hearing. These peers provided feedback regarding my interpretations of data particularly during the selective phase of coding. This lends to the credibility and dependability of the study.

Reflexivity is the consideration of the researcher's background to understand how her experiences may influence qualitative data collection, analyses, and in turn, the study findings (Krefting, 1999). Reflexivity was consistently considered throughout this study in terms of how my background, experiences, and perspectives impacted the study results. Being a white, upper middle-class female who was born and raised in the United

States, as well as having spent time in various countries outside the U.S., and working with immigrants in the United States through research, teaching English classes, and volunteer work, influenced not only the development of my research questions, but also the collection, analyses, and interpretation of data. In addition, I was pregnant during data collection and was a new mother during data analyses.

Throughout the last six years I intermittently travelled for short, 10 day trips to a few Central American countries including Guatemala, Honduras, and Costa Rica, where I volunteered and assisted with the construction of homes. Additionally, I spent one month in Guatemala during the summer of 2008, living with a Guatemalan family, studying Spanish, and travelling throughout the country. Together these travel experiences gave me insight into various aspects of the daily routines and experiences of families and children who are living in Central America.

Moreover I spent extensive time in the U.S. working with families from immigrant backgrounds. In particular, during the Spring of 2008, I conducted a small, qualitative study of Latino immigrant mothers who were part of a program in Washington, DC. I spent nearly four months observing and interviewing the Latina immigrants involved in this program about their experiences being mothers in the U.S. Finally, throughout the last couple years I worked with immigrant families in Maryland who were from a variety of regions of the world including Central and South America, as well as Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. I worked as a family partner for Habitat for Humanity and as an adult English teacher through the public schools adult education program.

Together, these travel experiences along with my experiences working with immigrants living in the U.S. have provided me with opportunities to understand both the strengths these families possess and the challenges they face, as well as diverse cultural beliefs these families possess. These experiences were particularly helpful in terms of data collection and analyses for this study.

Additionally, I worked closely with three UGRA's, with whom I regularly consulted regarding assumptions I held based on preconceived ideas and experiences. One of the UGRA's was an immigrant from El Salvador and thus, she was able to provide me with explanations for what life might have been like particularly for some of the parents from El Salvador, as well as their adjustment to life in the United States. In terms of African families, one of the teachers at La Casita del Saber, who is originally from Senegal, Africa, often shed light on some of what I was seeing with African families. Having this teacher as a sounding board did not breach any confidences of the African parents because they were at separate centers (the majority of African parents were at River Banks).

Finally, during data collection I was pregnant with my first child, and during the data analyses phase of the project I was in the earliest phases of motherhood. Certainly these experiences influenced my fieldwork as well as my interpretation of the data. For example, being pregnant as I collected data often provided a way of connecting with mothers either upon meeting one another or during the interview. During some interviews, mothers provided me with advice regarding labor and delivery, as well as selecting ECCE. In terms of analyses, being a new mother certainly influenced the way I understood each mother's story, and the gravity of the challenges they faced with sheer

bravery as mothers in a new country. For example, as I read Mercedes' account of leaving her seven month old daughter in El Salvador, caring for my own seven month old son, I had a much better understanding of the emotional turmoil she must have felt as she tried to adjust to life in the U.S., while her daughter remained in her COO.

Not being a member of the racial and/or cultural groups of the mothers in this study was sometimes a challenge because of both language issues as well as establishing trust. With the help of translators I was able to manage language challenges, and with the help of ECCE program teachers and staff I quickly became a trusted member of these mothers' weekly lives as they interacted with their children's ECCE programs. In addition, the UGRA's also helped establish rapport and trust with many of the Latinas as they were from similar cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds.

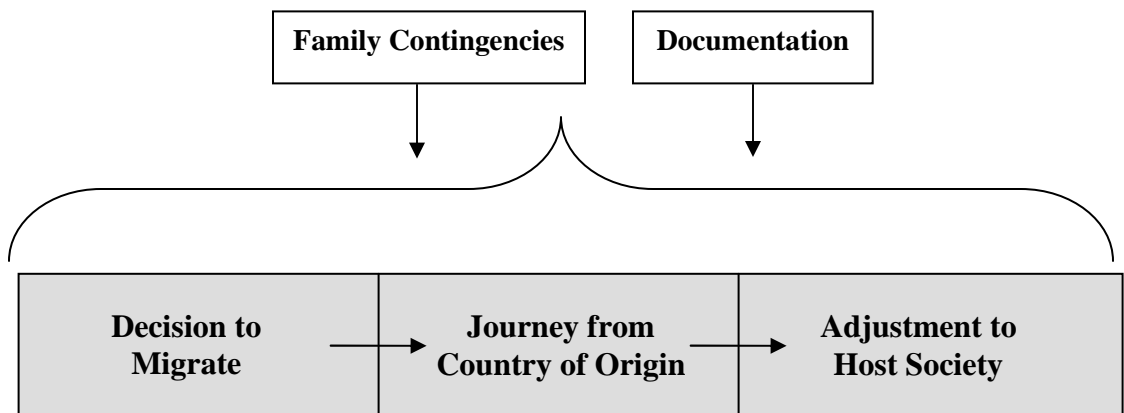
Oftentimes, however, not being of the same background as the mothers was a benefit during data collection. Being an outsider sometimes contributed to the richness of the data. Specifically, mothers did not assume that I knew or understood any aspects of their cultural beliefs or experiences. Thus, when I asked them questions regarding their experiences they saw this as an opportunity to teach me about their culture. If I were of the same cultural background as participants, they may not have shared certain aspects of their cultures based on assuming that as a member of the same culture I already understood certain cultural experiences. Finally, the participants were women. Consequently, I was able to connect with participants on the level of gender, which helped them feel comfortable during the interviews. Also, as previously mentioned being pregnant also enabled me to connect with participants in a unique way that invoked

trust and rapport fairly quickly. Overall, remaining reflexive throughout this research added to the credibility and confirmability of this research.

Chapter 4: Immigration Stories

This chapter provides insight into the first research question, which focused on mothers' experiences immigrating to the United States. These immigration stories were complex and were comprised of three interrelated and consecutive processes: decision to migrate, journey from country of origin (COO), and adjustment to life in the U.S. All of these mothers' immigration stories were shaped by interactions with their families as well as their documentation statuses (see Figure 2). Ultimately mothers' immigration experiences shaped their experiences of parenting in the U.S. These parenting experiences included negotiating their ideas regarding mothering, as well as navigating various child-and family related systems, like early childhood care and education (ECCE).

Figure 2: Immigration Stories



Decision to Migrate

For many mothers deciding to migrate to the U.S.—despite this being a life changing decision—was not drawn out and in some cases was fairly spontaneous. As

mothers reflected on their experiences coming to the U.S. it was clear that these decisions were often made fairly quickly and without a lot of forethought. This was particularly true among mothers who came from Mexico, Central and South America, and tended to come without documentation. Maria described her decision to come to the U.S. as “spontaneous”. She discussed emigrating from El Salvador to bring her younger sister to her mother in California. Her sister was too young to travel to the U.S. by herself, particularly without documentation, so Maria left the university and reunited her sister with her mother.

I never thought of coming here because I was going to the university, it was a spontaneous decision...I didn't want to come. It just happened that way. My mother wanted to bring my little sister to the U.S. and because she was so young—she was 11 years old at the time—the guy that was going to bring her said that he could not bring her. So I said I would go with her and I only had three more classes to finish school...it was quick because I sincerely I don't even know why I made that decision. I didn't even ask anybody, I just told my mother, 'mom, I am leaving.'

Maria did not return to El Salvador, stayed in California for a short while, and ultimately made her way to Washington, DC where her husband was living.

Mothers who came with visas, generally African mothers, planned a bit more than those without visas, but still not very much. Sana explained her decision to stay in the U.S., which she made *after* arriving in the U.S.

I left November 28th ...but the real one [civil war] started December 29th...Then when I came here my decision was to go back to Italy because my brother was in Italy and he said all my transcripts my mom took from Somalia into the university [in Italy] (she had many Italian teachers in Somalia so when the civil war began she had the opportunity to finish her studies in Italy). And when I came here I was supposed to go back to Italy by January 15...[my brother went back to Somalia] then I don't know who is going to support me [in Italy]...then some cousins they live here and they could support me here.

As this passage depicts, Sana came to the U.S. in the earliest days of the civil war in Somalia. Her initial plan was to come to the U.S. to visit cousins, before immigrating to Italy, where she would continue her studies. After being in the U.S. for just over a month, following the start of the civil war in her country of origin (COO), Sana was persuaded by cousins to stay in the U.S. With her brother no longer in Italy and unsure of how she would support herself there, she decided to stay with family in the U.S., and forego her plans to finish school in Italy. Despite making limited plans regarding coming to and staying in the U.S., mothers discussed four factors that prompted them to leave their COOs and come to the U.S.: political unrest and war, family reunification, treatment for ill family members, and better economic opportunities in the U.S.

Political unrest and war pushed a few mothers to emigrate from their COOs. For example, Maisa arrived in the U.S. in 2004 after fleeing a civil war in Darfur, Sudan. “I had been in refugee camps, also, like my family, and I applied in refugee camps to go to the border of Sudan with the neighbor country of Chad. At that time I got a visa from Chad for a chance to come to the United States.” Maisa was looking to leave Sudan because of the conflict there that was forcing her and her family to live in a refugee camp. Consequently, leaving was her primary focus, with the country she was headed to secondary. When Maisa came to the U.S. and left behind the refugee camps in Darfur for stability and peace in the U.S., she was by herself, and she knew only two people in the U.S. when she arrived. Her family continued to live in these camps, and thus she had limited opportunities to contact them because they had no access to internet and although they had a cell phone, the reception was always poor. Being away from her family

during a civil war, as well as not being able to talk with them on the phone much while she was adjusting to life in the U.S., was extremely difficult for Maisa.

Other mothers' decisions to immigrate to the U.S. were contingent on their families of origin as well as their families of procreation. These mothers decided to come to the U.S. to reunite with family members, boyfriends, and spouses, or to migrate with these significant others. Like mothers who left their COOs due to war and political conflict, mothers who came for family reunification often had not made detailed plans to migrate. In fact, as Maria described above, these decisions to come to the U.S. were sometimes quite spontaneous. In the case of Maria her decision to come to the U.S. was so spontaneous that it ultimately shaped her experiences in the U.S. Specifically, she did not finish her education in El Salvador as she intended to prior to immigrating to Washington, DC, which is where her husband was living. Had Maria's mother not asked her to bring her sister across the border, most likely Maria would have delayed her immigration so she could graduate before coming to the U.S. This delay would have potentially impacted her documentation status, as her husband was a U.S. resident and was working on the paperwork to sponsor her as she was finishing school. Consequently, if Maria had waited to come to the U.S. she would have come legally and with a university degree. This may have led to greater economic stability for her family than what her income from McDonald's provided.

Like Maria, Samira's decision to stay in the U.S. was rather spontaneous *and* contingent on her family's needs. Specifically, she visited her sister, Nyanath and decided to stay in the U.S. at her request. Nyanath lived in Virginia and was working on finishing her university degree, when Samira and her mother visited to help with her children for a

few months while she was in school. At the same time Samira had been in school in Sudan working towards being a medical lab technician. However, while visiting the U.S., Nyanath convinced her to stay, even though their mother went back to Sudan after six months.

Moreover, forces that prompted mothers to leave their COOs and come to the U.S. were sometimes so strong that some participants even chose to leave children behind, in their COOs, which was emotionally difficult. Mercedes left her seven month old baby in El Salvador because Juan, her boyfriend and the father of her child, who was a U.S. resident, told her he was spending too much money traveling back and forth and wanted her to come to the U.S. to be with him. Prior to meeting Juan Mercedes never had any intention of leaving El Salvador, and when she did emigrate, she did so somewhat reluctantly. Ultimately Mercedes and Juan split up. Mercedes remained in the U.S. because at this point she gave birth to another child and she believed it better for her to be raised here.

For some mothers it was a combination of factors that led them to the U.S. Usually these reasons were related to leaving poverty in their COOs and the promise of job opportunities in the U.S. Participants mentioned coming to the U.S. for economic reasons, to earn more money for their family. There were limited job opportunities and limited access to education for their children in their COOs, whereas in the U.S. there were opportunities for employment and what mothers believed to be a promise of a “better life”. For Esmeralda reasons for emigrating from Mexico were strictly related to earning more money in the U.S. Esmeralda’s parents essentially sent her to the U.S. to

earn money when she was 16. Her parents were extremely emotionally distant as she was growing up in Mexico.

They usually never said anything to me. My mom never talked to me, and of course, my father didn't talk to any of his children... No, the only thing that they want is that I send them money but they don't think anything because they never say anything... Well, my mom is sick so my mom asks that I send her money because we still have a younger sister but they still don't say much... I came to make money I didn't come to get married that's why they sent me so that I can send them back money.

Esmeralda left Mexico because her parents needed money. Of course when she arrived what she discovered was just how difficult it was to earn enough money in the U.S. to support oneself and still send some money back home. "[I came because] supposedly there are more opportunities, that is what they say over there [in Mexico], but it is not true." So it was both her parents' needs as well as the idea that she could earn a lot of money in the U.S. that contributed to Esmeralda's decision to migrate.

Mothers also came to the U.S. to support the medical treatment of family members. These mothers came to the U.S. contingent on hoping to help their family members. They helped their family members in one of two ways: earning money to send home for medical treatment or finding better treatment for their family members in the U.S. Isabel came to the U.S. to earn enough money to send back to her family in Mexico for her son's treatments for asthma. She described her reasons, "...[my oldest son] was young and sick. He was born with bronchitis and he needed treatment. My brothers were already here so they told me I could come live with them here, work, and send money for [his treatment], because there was very little work in Mexico." Ultimately Isabel stayed longer than the three or four years she initially anticipated being in the U.S. because her second daughter who was born in the U.S. was diagnosed with leukemia when she was

two. Isabel decided to stay and seek medical treatment for her daughter, and despite her daughter's cancer going into remission she remained so if the cancer returned she would have access to the necessary treatments. Marisol came to the U.S. to help her father who needed treatment for his diabetes. He was sick for a few years in Guatemala and her family could no longer afford his medications and treatments there, so he came to the U.S. for treatment. Two years later Marisol joined him in the U.S. to help with his care after he went blind and lost his speech from the diabetes.

COO often dictated the documents mothers were able to receive to enter and remain in the U.S. legally. For example, mothers who emigrated from different African countries to avoid political and social unrest were able to get visas to initially come here as refugees or asylees, and then could apply to remain in the U.S. permanently. Mothers who came for family reunification reasons, were often sponsored by their family members and received green cards to come and remain in the U.S. legally. In the U.S. in 2009, 27% of all "new arrival" immigrants and refugees (NAIR) were admitted on family-sponsored visas, 35% of all NAIR were admitted as immediate relatives of U.S. citizens, 28% of all NAIR as refugees and asylees, and 7% of all NAIR obtained visas through the diversity lottery (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2010). Obtaining a green card through family members or as a refugee/ asylee was not always possible, particularly for mothers from Mexico, Central, and South America. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, in 2010, 1,780 individuals from El Salvador applied for asylum in the U.S. and only 146 were granted this status; whereas 614 Ethiopians applied and 407 were granted. Consequently, because of their commitment to their families, some mothers chose to make the journey to the U.S. without documentation. These

mothers tended to remain in the U.S. undocumented despite applying for residency paperwork year after year. Finally, mothers who came solely for economic reasons were often unable to secure the appropriate documentation to come to the U.S. and/ or to remain in the U.S. In turn, arriving legally in the U.S. and overstaying one's visa, generally after giving birth to a child was another way mothers in this study were without proper documentation.

Overall, there were varied reasons that mothers came to the U.S. including political unrest and conflict in their COOs, health issues of family members, reunification with family, and finally, better economic opportunities in the U.S. than in their COOs. Both family and documentation shaped mothers' decisions to migrate to the U.S. For many mothers their decisions to come to the U.S. were very much contingent or based on the needs and desires of family members. Documentation was a result of the reasons that mothers immigrated, as well as the country they were emigrating from, in terms of quotas. For example, mothers who fled war and political unrest generally arrived as refugees or asylees, and received appropriate documentation. Other mothers from countries like Ethiopia, Ghana and Eritrea were able to receive visas through the diversity lottery (U.S. Embassy in Dakar, Senegal, n.d.). In contrast, it was impossible for mothers from Central America to receive diversity lottery visas because the countries in Central America from which mothers came already had high rates of immigration to the U.S.

The Journey

Despite not having documentation, Sofia decided to come to the U.S. to secure "a better future," for her children. Her experiences traveling to the U.S. from El Salvador

with her husband were similar to many mothers who came from Mexico and Central America.

...it took almost a month. It was very hard. We (there were 90 other people with Sofia and her husband) all had to walk almost 11 days and by bus too. We would only sleep for like two hours and it was really hard. Through the desert when we were sleeping a snake bit me two times. My husband thought I was going to die....It was \$6,000 per person...there were 10 of us who didn't have anything to eat, not even water. We would go for whole days without water...When we were walking because for example my feet would get very swollen because the shoes I wore were not my size and I would bleed a lot. There was a time when I told my husband he should go on without me.

For mothers who came to the U.S. without the appropriate documentation their actual journeys to the U.S. were far more physically harrowing and stressful than mothers who were able to come to the U.S. via airplane with visas and necessary paperwork. However, leaving one's country during the midst of civil war and political unrest created journeys to the U.S. that were filled with fear and sadness for some mothers. These mothers were separated from their families, who were either migrating to other countries or remaining in refugee camps to escape unrest. Fortunately these mothers were spared physically grueling journeys, but still had to endure stressful travels. For example, Maisa was living in a refugee camp in Sudan near the border with Chad because her family's village was burned in the civil war in Darfur. She traveled to Chad, applied for a U.S. visa there, and came on an airplane to the U.S. Physically her trip was not dangerous or unsafe, but it was rather difficult to leave her family in Sudan as she feared for the safety and missed them terribly.

The majority of mothers entering the U.S. without a visa or necessary documentation were from Mexico and Central America, and they shared stories of extremely arduous trips from their homes to the U.S. Mothers paid between \$3,000 and

\$6,000 for each person to be taken through the desert of Mexico by coyotes who are individuals who earn money by illegally crossing immigrants over the Mexican border into the U.S. These trips could sometimes take as long as one month. Generally, coyotes would provide mothers with three opportunities to successfully enter the U.S. During these journeys, mothers were often required to walk for days with blistering feet, very little food, water, and sleep, and in some cases to risk their lives riding on the tops of trains, swimming across rivers with heavy currents, and keeping snakes and other critters at bay during the nights in the desert, as well as witnessing the loss of others' lives. These experiences were so challenging some mothers, as Sofia indicated above, thought they were going to die in the desert as they tried to make their way to the U.S. border.

Some participants with similar experiences to Sofia were traveling alone, and in addition to the physically and emotionally grueling journey through the desert, they also experienced being caught by immigration. Among mothers who traveled alone, some were forced to endure humiliating experiences with immigration officers like being strip searched. Daniela, who came to the U.S. at her mother's request, was traveling alone, caught, and detained by immigration officials. She described her experiences being arrested and held in custody until her mother was able to get her freed.

...they treat you—well, I think they treat dogs better than people...I was arrested for a month. Oh I was crying because I felt when they arrested me I didn't know why they had to strip me. We were all a group of women in a room naked...I felt ridiculous...I had to go through so many bad experiences. I didn't feel like I deserved them because I had not committed anything bad....There were a lot of women and a man arrived and told us to take off all of our clothes. And you have to do it..., and if you left the cell they had to strip search you when you returned. Since I did not want to be inspected, I would not go out [of the cell].

Traveling alone with children was the experience of a few mothers in this study. This generally meant one family member, usually the father, arrived in the U.S. first to set up for the family by finding employment and a place to live as well as arranging for the family's arrival. Sometimes it was a few months and sometimes it was a few years that they were separated. Alejandra traveled alone with her 18 month old daughter as her husband came to the U.S. first, and "sent for" her a year later.

I wanted to get a visa but they wouldn't give it to me...I came walking through the desert because my husband didn't have work in El Salvador. He came first and after a year he sent for me. We had a little girl at the time. She was six months when he left and she was a year and a half when we got here.

It took Alejandra three tries to get over the border, and she and her husband paid \$12,000 (\$6,000 each) for both she and her daughter to cross into the U.S. She left her job as a nurse and her family in El Salvador, experienced a difficult and expensive trip to the U.S., and arrived in the U.S. undocumented to live in a small apartment, work in a low-wage job, and spend very little time with her husband who worked an opposite shift. In many ways Alejandra paid so much to come to the U.S., only to arrive in a new country with nothing. This ultimately contributed to Alejandra experiencing depressive feelings, which is discussed later in this chapter. Traveling with children was seen as difficult by some whether they had documentation or not. Yenee, a single mother from Ethiopia, who gave birth to her son after being in the U.S. for seven years, described feeling as though she would probably not have made the journey to the U.S. if she already had her son. She discussed the difficulty of traveling with a baby. "...the first time, it was easy. But like I don't know now things are complicated for travel with a baby. It is very easy when you are single and you don't have anything."

Once mothers crossed into the U.S. some came directly to the DC metro area while others spent days, months, even years in other parts of the U.S. including Florida, New York, Texas, North Carolina, and Illinois before coming to Washington, DC. Generally mothers made stopovers because they had family that lived in these different geographic areas. Mothers who spent time in other places before coming to DC ultimately came to the U.S. capital city for both economic and family reasons. For example, after spending two days in Maryland in a house with other undocumented immigrants, Juliana continued on to New York, where she had a cousin. However after being there for eight months and not earning enough money to send back to her father, who had used his house as collateral, to borrow money to pay for Juliana's trip to the U.S., Juliana began to consider other options. This was around the same time a former coworker from when she worked at a fruit company in Guatemala, who was now living in Washington, DC, contacted her.

It was a good, stable place where we were living but I wasn't able to start paying the money I owed. So my dad...the money that he had borrowed on the house, he said they had given him three months to pay it back...and I wasn't working on this side so they were going to take away his house. So I told him (former coworker who was living in Washington, DC) how it was going and he told me that in Washington, [DC] there is more work ...what mattered most to me was to pay my dad the money because he can't lose his house because what's the point of me being here if I can't help my family...So he said, 'well, come here and we'll find you a job.'...and that is how I came to Washington.

The journeys that some mothers made to the U.S. were physically and emotionally strenuous and many mothers mentioned that if they went back to their COOs they would never again be able to bear another similar passage to the U.S. Consequently, most did not plan to return to their COOs unless they were absolutely certain they would never want to return to the U.S. Some mothers were nostalgic about their home countries

and would entertain notions of returning home; however, they were not completely confident that things would be better for them at home, and could not risk going back home, not being happy, and not being able to return to the U.S.

There was only one family who seemed to have very definite plans about going back home. Valeria and her husband migrated to the U.S. seven years before they were interviewed and when asked about the future they mentioned definite plans to return to Mexico to be with family in the next three to five years—no other family mentioned returning to their COO while their children were still young. Given that they did not arrive recently in the U.S., and that they have a house in Mexico, as well as the fact that Valeria mentioned her intentions to finish her last year of school in Mexico, it seems as though their plans to go back to their COO will likely come to fruition. Often mothers discussed wanting to go back to their COOs shortly after they arrived; however after a few years many mothers gave birth to more children, and became more integrated in the child and family institutions in U.S. society, and despite missing home, they thought it better for their children and sometimes themselves to stay in the U.S. Valeria did not indicate any of the same desires to have her children finish school in the U.S., and certainly had a detailed plan about when and why they would go back to Mexico, which none of the other mothers in the study mentioned.

Most mothers indicated that when they were older, and their children were in college they would then consider the possibility of returning to their COO. Most did not want to return when their children were young because they wanted to ensure that their children were educated in the U.S. In the meantime many were unable to even visit their COOs because they could not afford the trip. Among mothers who were undocumented,

they knew if they went back to their countries they would most likely not return to the U.S. because they could not bear another difficult journey across the border.

Adjustment to the U.S.

Upon arriving in the U.S., the majority of mothers in this study either stayed with or spent time with family and friends. Mothers who did not initially stay with family or friends upon their arrival to the U.S., had spouses who were already in the U.S. when they arrived or they came with their spouses. There were no mothers who arrived in the U.S. on their own and did not have any support from family or friends. However for some mothers these supports in the U.S. were more limited. This was particularly true for Maisa who migrated because of the civil war happening in Darfur. When she arrived she stayed with a friend of her brothers for a few days, and then an acquaintance from Darfur. Only three months after Maisa arrived, she married her husband who she met here, and explained to me, "...you know, in the United States it is not easy to be by yourself." In contrast, other mothers arrived to have the support of their immediate family including mothers, siblings, and/or spouses. Regardless of the level of support mothers had when they arrived, most experienced a period of adjustment to living in the U.S. They were forced to adjust to life without family members, with new and usually different employment, and more demanding daily routines. This process of adjustment was even more complex and challenging when mothers started parenting in this new context.

Employment contributed to the majority of mothers' adjustment experiences. However, they discussed employment in the U.S. with fairly mixed feelings. Many

mothers mentioned that they really liked being in the U.S because of all the opportunities for employment as well as advancing one's education as Desta described,

...and when I first came I went to school and in the meantime I was working...so I worked part time, went to school and still had enough time to have a family and send the money back home for my sisters and brothers. And when I came here my mom was [in Ethiopia] too, so I sent money for her too. I still paid the school—I got financial aid so that helped—I paid my books and still I had enough...to send, especially for the holidays—not all the time but for the special days like holidays.

Enrolling in English classes, as well as taking advantage of other educational opportunities like certificate and associate degree programs available at community colleges in the U.S. was something mothers really appreciated in the U.S. Mothers like Desta felt empowered by their abilities to support their families and move forward in their own lives.

This new level of responsibility that mothers faced was something that particularly struck many participants, as they began to parent in the U.S. One described it as, “independence,” that was felt, particularly in relation to work and children. Negasi, Aisha's husband, stated, “the social systems are different...you see you do most things by yourself here. You work, you take care of your family, yourself, your kids. You are more independent here.” However these feelings of empowerment and independence were juxtaposed with feelings of stress and pressure mothers felt in relation to the responsibility they now had in the U.S. with limited supports.

In terms of work, mothers mentioned that to earn enough money to live, both parents needed to work, and to work a lot. Some discussed feeling that if they did not have a job, they would end up with nothing; whereas in their COOs if they did not have a job, they would still be able to live in their families' homes, and as one person said, “you

can always have beans, rice, and tortillas.” Esmeralda described this pressure, “The difference here is that if you don’t have a job then no one will help you but [in Mexico] they are good to you and if you don’t have anywhere to live they will help you, but here they won’t.” Elsa, a mother of two children very much missed her family of origin who were in her COO, she mentioned nostalgically her experiences with family dinners in Mexico. Elsa discussed the difficulty of all this pressure regarding work coupled with not having family support.

I mean here it’s tough, it’s tough living here. Because you have to do so many things, it’s different. Not things you’d think of before [coming here], you know? And not being with your family, being alone...well I think in Mexico even if you are working to make ends meet you are still happy with your family, everyone’s together. When it was time to eat, we would all eat together. But not here. Here it is all about working, working, and well, working.

Many mothers shared Elsa’s sentiment in terms of missing their family and feeling as though they did not have a lot of family support, particularly in relation to the amount of additional demands they were facing as mothers in a new society. In lieu of family support mothers turned to what they saw as a wealth of institutional supports for families. Selena described this,

I think here one feels greater responsibility here and at the same time you get more information [on parenting] here—like about schools, on what is important for their future, and what one has to do in their best interest...over there [in El Salvador] hardly ever.

Being undocumented was another challenging aspect of mothers’ adjustments to living in the U.S. Daniela applied for a visa before coming to the U.S. but was denied, and because she wanted to see her mother, who initially came to the U.S. to escape problems with Daniela’s father, she decided to come to the U.S. without documentation.

However, despite having the support of her mother when she arrived, Daniela experienced fear and worry, particularly in relation to her documentation status.

If you don't have your documents in order you don't feel liberated to do what you want. If you want to drive, you can't go out and get a license because you don't have your papers in order....Also that you are always afraid. Is what I will do right? It what I will do, wrong? You don't know what your rights are here. One is always afraid...

Mothers' lives changed immensely after arriving in the U.S., particularly in terms of couple relationships and children. Getting married and/or having children shortly after arriving was not uncommon, and these were generally considered positive experiences. However a few mothers arrived in the U.S. to be faced with and expected to live within an abusive relationship. Juan, the father of Mercedes children convinced her to come to the U.S. She suffered through a difficult journey to the U.S., including riding on the roof of a train through the mountains in extremely cold weather, and almost falling off because she somehow fell asleep. Mercedes described her life here initially as "like hell," because her husband was always drunk and constantly swearing at her. In addition to inflicting mental and emotional abuse, Juan physically abused Mercedes. She had no family in the U.S. and limited knowledge of where to seek help or who to turn to for protection since she had no family in the U.S.

Even among mothers with husbands who were not abusive, depressive feelings were fairly common. Some of this was related to what mothers left behind in their COOs as well as having limited emotional support from their husbands who worked long hours to financially support their families and were not there for emotional support as mothers adjusted to being in a new place away from family. Alejandra described her experiences shortly after arriving in the U.S.

The reason why we came is because he didn't have a job—I did, I was a nurse. But because we were married and because of our daughter, he sent for me... When I arrived in New Jersey, the six months we lived there I didn't like it. It was too small. In El Salvador we had a house with a lot of land with animals—my mothers always had animals. What we have here [in Virginia] is a lot bigger than where we lived in New Jersey. I felt like a prisoner [there]. I spent my time crying and depressed, and with my little girl. My husband just worked.

After six months Alejandra and her husband moved to the DC metro area because her husband had an accident at work, which left him unable to work, and consequently without money. Some of Alejandra's family was in Maryland, and specifically her brother offered Alejandra's husband a job, and they were able to live with her uncle for two months. Slowly, over time things got better for Alejandra. However at the time of the interview, she still had desires to return to El Salvador, which was not surprising given that her life there was good—she had a stable job as a nurse (in the U.S. she worked at McDonald's and sold Avon products because her English was not strong enough to work in the medical industry), and the majority of her family remained in El Salvador. However, she chose to stay in the U.S. because she believed life in the U.S. was better for her children, particularly in terms of education and their safety.

Discrimination was another challenge mothers faced upon arriving in the U.S. Sofia described a woman in her building who told her that she, “is not allowed to speak Spanish,” to her children. Sofia told me that it did not make her “feel *that* uncomfortable” because she just ignored her and continued to speak with her son and daughter in Spanish. Other mothers experienced what they perceived as discrimination for being from another country during their interactions with different child- and family-oriented agencies. Aster described the following interaction at social services when she went to reapply for Food Stamps after they were cancelled.

[The social service person said], 'you have housing, you don't want to be dependent on the government,' ...and she said, 'do you have any mental health help?' And I say, 'I don't have.' And she said, 'good---don't be dependent on the government!' I have never been in this situation before--- 'don't be dependent,' she said, you know.... If you are a foreigner they have to give you a hard time... Like I don't want to be in this situation too-I just ask [for Food Stamps], and that's it. I don't want to be in this situation, you know. Just God help me until Hakim can be in Kindergarten, that's it.

After this interaction, Aster never again returned to social services, and instead relied on her son's ECCE program to act as a liaison with different government programs for her.

Mothers discussed challenges related to leaving significant aspects of their lives in their COOs when they immigrated to the U.S. including children, family members in bad situations, stable employment, and attending university. Leaving these people and things behind also contributed to mothers' intentions regarding staying in the U.S. and/or returning to their COOs.

Some parents were forced by circumstances, generally related to documentation issues and financial means, to leave at least one child in their COO. For some parents children were left behind with hopes of ultimately bringing them to the U.S. once visa issues were resolved; whereas other parents planned to reunify with their children by returning to their COOs. Sometimes, after at least a few years, families were able to get visas for their children, but usually returning to their COOs to be with the child left behind, did not occur as parents intended. Children left in COOs stayed with and were being raised by relatives, usually either aunts, uncles or grandparents.

For the mothers from Central America and Mexico there were either no opportunities to bring their children to the U.S. legally because as parents they arrived without documentation, or for those who were documented, their children did not want to

come to the U.S. Marisa had three children in El Salvador, who were ages 15, 20, and 22 at the time of the interview. When Marisa came to the U.S. it was to earn money to support her children because she could not earn enough on her own in El Salvador after her first husband died. At the time of the interview, her children were in high school and college in El Salvador and were not interested in living in the U.S. Pedro, Marisa's partner, believed it was good that the children did not want to come to the U.S. because he thought if they came as teens they would get involved in drugs, gangs or become pregnant.

I don't like our kids coming here from our country, like teenagers just [for] school or whatever and they get lost, they get involved in drugs, liquor and everything because they come in like...That's why I prefer they stay there and send the money to them until they finish their college or university over there because here is too much...Yes, in gangs...or go to the school and get pregnant and that's how Spanish people do...

Despite having another child in the U.S. with Pedro, it was difficult for Marisa to not be with her older children. At the same time, she agreed with Pedro that the U.S. was not good for them, so instead they sent money to them in El Salvador every other week.

Families from Africa who initially could not bring their children to the U.S. because of documentation issues were ultimately able to get the appropriate paperwork to reunite with their children. However for some, like Serwa's family, this was as many as seven years later. When Serwa and her husband received the opportunity to migrate to the U.S., they (and not their children too) were granted pathways to green cards and ultimately citizenship for themselves. Consequently their two children who were eight and three when Serwa and her husband migrated to the U.S. were unable to join their parents until seven years later when their parents were finally able to get the appropriate

citizenship paperwork for their children. It was very difficult for the entire family, especially since for financial reasons, Serwa and her husband were only able to visit Ghana for six weeks once during the seven years. Also, while they were in the U.S. they gave birth to two more children who were not able to meet their siblings until they arrived in the U.S.

It's not easy for them...because always when we would call them they, they want to live with us. They were living with my sister and my mom but they still need us. And we too need them to stay with us...as a family.

For some mothers leaving other family members behind that were in bad situations, was most challenging. There was constant worry and sometimes guilt that mothers felt for these family members. For Maisa, whose family was still in a refugee camp in Darfur close to six years after she left, the memory not only served as a reminder of the terrible situation she left, but also because communication over the phone and internet were difficult, was a constant source of worry for her. Maisa coped with this loss by focusing on raising her children. Maisa went on to describe, "if I didn't have my kids I wouldn't be happy, but now I have my kids and I spend time with them." She indicated that if she were in Sudan she would most likely not be married nor would she have children at this point in her life. Other mothers worried about their families' economic situations, especially when they were unable to send them financial assistance despite working in a stronger economy in the U.S. Juliana ultimately moved from New York to Washington, DC because she needed to earn more money to send back to her father so he did not lose his house for financial reasons.

Finally, a number of mothers left stable employment and/or educational opportunities when they immigrated to the U.S. In terms of employment, mothers were

unable to find jobs that paid well and offered good work conditions because of language skills, education and for some, documentation issues. Despite coming to the U.S. to earn more money to send back to her children in El Salvador, Marisa initially was unable to find a good job in the U.S., particularly in terms of working conditions. In El Salvador she had been a secretary and worked standard 9:00am to 5:00pm work hours; however when she came here she was working during the late afternoons and evenings at a restaurant because of her inability to speak English well. Pedro worked during the day, so they would go days at a time without seeing one another. However, by the time Marisa was interviewed for this project she had changed jobs and was working as a home health aide during the mornings and early afternoons, but this was after being in the U.S. for a few years. In addition, mothers were not able to continue their studies in the U.S. as they would have in their COOs because of language and financial challenges. There were a number of mothers who were in the middle of university when they came to the U.S.—specifically, some mothers were pursuing various medical careers and hoped to one day continue this in the U.S. However many indicated the difficulty in continuing their studies in the U.S. because of language challenges. Daniela, who joined her mother here after her mother had been here 14 years, described these challenges.

And [my mother] told me, ‘come and study here, it’s better over here.’ I listened to her, but when I arrived here it wasn’t the same because you have to learn English. I had to get my GED because I finished high school in my country. I was left, how can I put it? I was left stagnant. I could not study in university here.

Daniela spent a lot of time in English classes, which she hoped would ultimately help her abilities to pursue a university degree

In sum, mothers' immigration stories were comprised of three distinct dimensions: reasons and decisions to migrate, the journeys they experienced, and finally how they adjusted to life in the U.S. In addition, these processes were influenced by both family and documentation. Specifically, many decisions to migrate to the U.S. were contingent on family members' needs—whether it was to reunite with a spouse or other family member, or to bring a family member to the U.S., or to earn money to send home to family. However, despite decisions to come to the U.S. being dependent on family members' needs, these mothers were expected to function fairly independently when they arrived. Mothers' immigration stories were complex, and often began with limited plans to come to the U.S., and in some cases resulted in a variety of challenges when they arrived. Mothers left careers, educational opportunities, and important family members for what they thought were better opportunities for their children in terms of safety and education. These mothers' immigration stories, coupled with their negotiations of parenting beliefs in the U.S. as well as their navigation of U.S. systems related to young children, shaped immigrant mothers' experiences of being parents of young children in the U.S.

Chapter 5: Negotiating Parenthood in a New Host Society

In this chapter, the second research question, focused on how low-income immigrant mothers negotiate parenting in the U.S., is discussed. The process of negotiating parenting as an immigrant mother in the U.S. included four key areas: 1) responsibility for children; 2) building responsive relationships with children; 3) cultural connections with mothers' COOs; and, 4) gender roles. In addition to understanding how these areas of parenting emerged from mothers' countries of origin (COOs) and from the new host society, the ways context influenced these ideas are explored. Finally the parenting practices and experiences that resulted are described (see Figure 3).

When mothers began parenting in the U.S. they started to think about and experience the complexity of life in a new country, including facing the demands of living in the U.S. with limited familial and community support. Consequently, for many mothers the largest adjustment after migrating to the U.S. came when they began rearing their children in a new society. Navigating different institutional, legal, and familial structures, and negotiating beliefs, and practices related to this new phase in their lives were challenging. This complexity was rooted in a tension between nostalgia for one's country of origin, often related to issues of parenting and family relationships, and a desire for a better life in the U.S. Mothers felt even more tension after having children in the U.S. because they tended to be in contact with both their families of origin and various child-and family-related institutions in the U.S. From both of these sources mothers gathered a lot of advice regarding parenting ideas and practices. Trying to make sense of all of this new information was sometimes difficult for mothers.

Mothers arrived in the U.S. with certain ideas and practices related to parenting, and developed new ideas and practices once they were living in the U.S. However, the ways mothers negotiated their parenting in the U.S. was not solely based on the process of melding together the varied ideas and practices from their COO and the U.S. Rather, these mothers created new frameworks for parenting in the U.S, which included the development of ideas and practices based on both the U.S. and their COOs coupled with what was possible given the context in which they were living. Specifically, contextual factors related to families' economic needs, daily routines, and connections with their families in their COOs and in the U.S., contributed to mothers' negotiations and experiences of parenting young children in the U.S. These negotiations of parenting in the U.S. were often emotionally and physically demanding, and required mothers to be self-sacrificing as well as persevere through difficult situations by drawing upon the hope they held for their children's success.

Mothers came to the U.S. with a variety of experiences related to parenting in their COOs. Specifically, just over a quarter (n=11) of the mothers were parents when they arrived in the U.S., and either left their children in their COOs (n=6) or traveled with their children to the U.S. (n=5). Some mothers did not have children until they arrived in the U.S. and others never intended on becoming mothers while away from their COOs when they decided to migrate to the U.S. Also, given that some mothers' decisions to come to the U.S. were spontaneous, they often did not think about how they would raise their children in a new culture until they were pregnant or gave birth. Elsa described this experience.

Honestly, since I never thought 'Oh I'm going to go to the U.S.,' I never thought about things, I don't know, like I'm going to have a lot of money. I never

imagined none of that stuff. Just thought about coming--didn't even think about having my kids here or anything.

Elsa was someone who very much missed her family of origin, the majority of whom still lived in Mexico. Having children likely contributed to missing her family more.

In addition, many mothers did not realize what life would be like when they arrived, and things were more difficult than they anticipated. Sharon's immigration to the U.S. from Ghana was contingent on her husband, Luke. Luke was pursuing a degree in fashion at a school in New York City, and came to the U.S. on a student visa. Sharon and their son could not immigrate with Luka because of documentation issues. Four years later, when Sharon's documents were in order she immigrated to the U.S., leaving their son in Ghana for visa reasons. Six years later their son still remained in Ghana due to paperwork issues. Sharon described her ideas of the U.S. before and after they immigrated,

...Course back home we used to have this dream of America that everything here is rosy. And it's not. When you work hard you can make life better for yourself but it is far from rosy...so I guess all the things you do here, it is not always easy.

Sharon was happy to be living in the U.S. but mentioned after being in the U.S. for six years she would advise friends, if they had good jobs in Ghana to stay there. She indicated that many people would leave stable careers and lives in Ghana to pursue "a better life" in the U.S. but when they arrived, they often faced far worse circumstances than their lives in Ghana.

Case Examples of the Negotiation of Parenting Practices

Aamina's story. Aamina migrated to the U.S. from Ethiopia seven years before she was interviewed. She came to the U.S. in search of a “better life” than she had in her COO. However, when Aamina arrived she was extremely homesick, and was faced with building her life “from scratch” because she did not have any family or friends in the U.S. upon whom she could rely as she did in Ethiopia.

A few years after arriving in the U.S. she gave birth to her daughter, Gabra. Aamina felt overwhelmed by the responsibility of being a mother when Gabra was a baby. Having access to the physical and emotional support of family and the community in terms of raising children was customary in Ethiopia. However Aamina did not have this support in the U.S. Thus, in addition to all the challenges that were a part of the transition to parenthood, Aamina faced adjusting to raising a child without the helping hands of her family and community. Also, her relationship with Gabra's father, Demissie, was fairly strained and worsened with time as he began to abuse their daughter when she was three. This abuse led to the involvement of CPS, Gabra being placed in foster care for part of year, and Aamina being mandated by the court to enroll in parenting classes.

It was through these parenting classes that Aamina began to learn about being responsive in her parenting, and how to utilize other discipline techniques rather than corporal punishment. She began to spend more time talking to Gabra and using strategies to provide her with choices, giving her agency, and thus avoiding arguments that often led to physical punishment. Talking with children rather than using corporal punishment was not something Aamina witnessed during her childhood in Ethiopia. Even though much of what she was learning in parenting classes was different than how she was raised

and diverged from what her family believed back home, Aamina abided by what she learned in these classes because Gabra was in foster care and she wanted her to be able to come home. Also, she realized the strategies she learned in these classes worked. Aamina gained such a wealth of parenting knowledge that she became the person her friends in the U.S. depended upon for parenting advice.

At the same time Aamina would speak with her mother in Ethiopia, and in discussing discipline her mother would insist that if Aamina brought Gabra to church then everything would be fine. Because of Aamina's busy work schedule as well as the location of the Ethiopian church—40 minutes away from their home—she was unable to bring Gabra to church. Over time Aamina began to ask her mother less and less for advice regarding raising her daughter because she knew her mother would just tell her to bring Gabra to church as she believed this would solve any parenting challenges.

Despite Aamina limiting the amount she asked her mother for advice, conflicts with parenting ideas in her country of origin could not always be avoided, particularly when she visited Ethiopia. During a recent trip home family members questioned the way Aamina interacted with her daughter, commenting that she talked to her too much and that it was not necessary because she was still a baby—Gabra was four years old at the time of the visit. Aamina had learned the importance of interacting with and talking with children in her CPS, court-mandated parenting classes in the U.S., and had seen the benefits of this. In turn, regardless of her family's opinions, she continued to interact and speak with her daughter as she had been taught in the U.S. Over time Aamina experienced tension and conflict with the way she was raising her daughter in the U.S.

and her family's ideas. Despite this, Aamina resolved to do what she believed was right for her daughter—much of this being based on parenting ideas she learned in the U.S.

Viviana's story. . Viviana was six years old when her mother left El Salvador for work in the U.S. In the nine years that she was gone Viviana only saw her mother once but was able to speak with her on the phone every day. Viviana considered her aunt who raised her from the time she was six until she came to the U.S. at age 17, as more of a mother than her biological mother. At the time of the interview Viviana was married and her children were 12, 11, 6, and 3 years old. Although emotional distance stood between Viviana and her mother, they saw each other every day as Viviana's mother provided after school care for the three oldest children

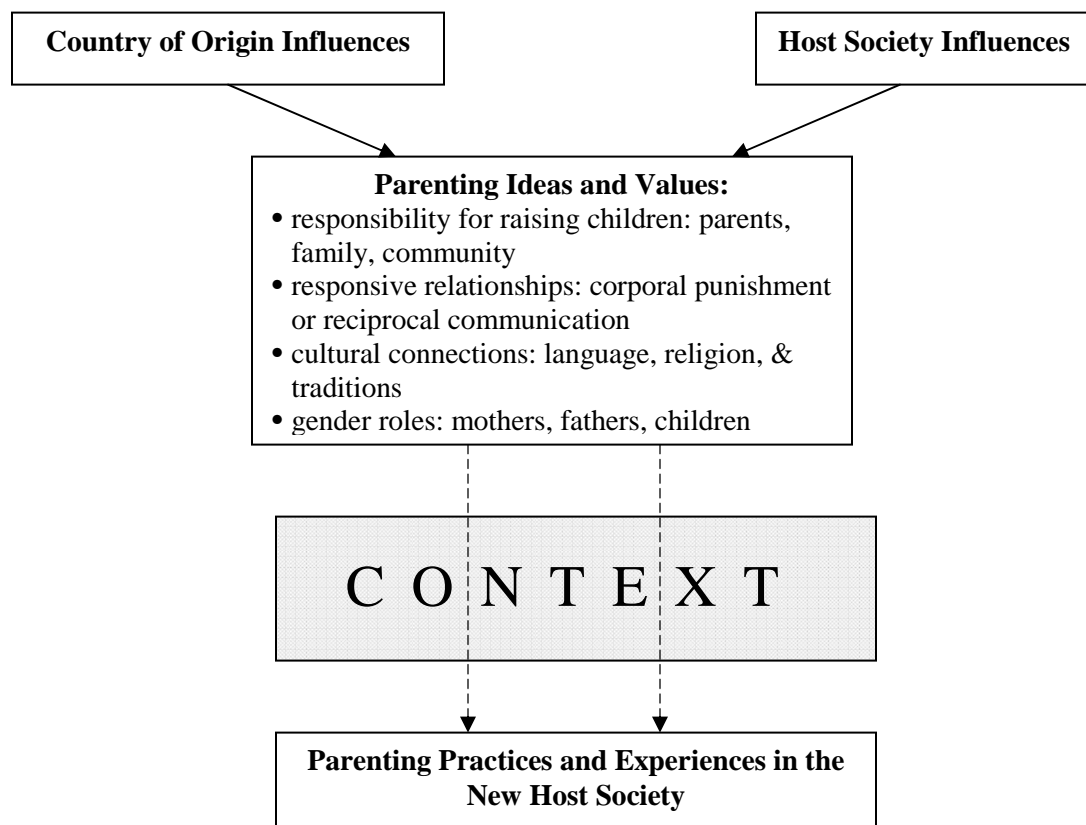
Viviana held a child development associate and worked as a home visitor for Early Head Start. In turn, she had a wealth of knowledge regarding child development and parenting education, and spent her days teaching other mothers how to interact with their young children. Despite this, Viviana struggled with her own parenting. Being raised in El Salvador she witnessed corporal punishment, and consequently, as a parent she was without a role model for communicating openly with her children rather than hitting them when they were misbehaving. Particularly with her oldest daughter who was 12, Viviana felt a constant tension between what she knew was acceptable parenting in the U.S. and her long held beliefs from El Salvador regarding needing to teach children respect for their elders by using corporal punishment.

When Viviana felt particularly challenged she would contact a friend that she knew from work who was a therapist and a parenting educator. This friend counseled Viviana on the phone to help her appropriately discipline her children. Despite seeing

her mother every day for child care reasons, Viviana generally did not ask her for advice or even much emotional support. They were still rebuilding their relationship and Viviana did not feel comfortable confiding in her mother about the challenges she felt as a mother. Viviana knew the drawbacks of corporal punishment, but at the time of interview she was still very much in the process negotiating her parenting practices such that they reflected what was acceptable in the U.S.

Both Aamina and Viviana were faced with adjusting to life in the U.S. as parents, and mothering with only limited support from family and friends. Learning new discipline techniques was a large focus of their parenting experiences in the U.S. In addition, their gendered experiences as mothers were slightly different than they would have been in their COOs. Both mothers were employed, which they would not have been in their COOs, as providing financially for the family was generally considered the responsibility of men in their COOs. Also, both Viviana and Aamina were committed to their children knowing English as well as their native tongues. However, Viviana was more structured regarding the children only speaking Spanish at home. Aamina spoke both English and Amharic to Gabra, and mentioned struggling with her daughter not knowing how to speak Amharic very well. Ultimately both mothers experienced the tension between parenting ideas from their cultures of origin and beliefs related to parenting from the U.S. However, Aamina and Viviana were both at different stages of their negotiation of various aspects of parenting in the U.S.

Figure 3: Development of Parenting Practices and Experiences



Parenting Ideas and Values

Regardless of whether participants were already mothers when they arrived in the U.S. or if they became mothers after arriving, as they negotiated parenthood in the U.S., their ideas and practices related to parenting were shaped by aspects of their countries of origin (COOs) and U.S. culture. Ultimately mothers created new frameworks for parenting, which were neither solely reflective of U.S. ideas and practices, nor were they completely influenced by mothers' COOs. This creation of parenting in the U.S. was influenced by mothers' perceptions of cultural norms for child rearing in their COOs and in the U.S., the consideration of one's own childhood, soliciting advice from parents and

family members in mothers' COOs, observing others' parenting in the U.S., and consulting experts in the U.S. for ideas regarding parenting.

Responsibility for raising children: Parents, family, or community? As mothers started raising their children in the U.S. they began to wrestle with being solely responsible for their children's development and well-being. Specifically, many mothers discussed being brought up in cultures where whole families and communities contributed to raising children. The roles of families did not vary based on region of origin—in other words, parents from Latin America and Africa seemed to share similar ideas regarding what was expected of families in their COOs.

Given families' roles in raising children, it was not uncommon for parents to share homes with other family members in their COOs. This taught children how to share at a very early age, something children in the U.S. usually learned in preschool. Sana, a mother of four girls from Somalia was committed to modeling her own parenting after her mothers' parenting. This seemed to stem from her nostalgia for the country she left behind, which she "loved". She described what life was like there when she was a child.

Over there we have grandma, grandfather maybe we live in same place- a big house. And [you are not] hesitant to have someone else living in your house. But in the US it's different even though your mom might [visit] you have to say next year or next month my mom's coming but she has to be invited. But in Somalia we don't have it, the mother, the grandma, the family- you even might see it the brother and sister they have a marriage in the same house and everybody is there. And we share the food and that's a something differently because back home kids they learning fast to the share everything in the house not the school.

Despite the nostalgia she held for life in her country as a child Sana could not consider returning home. At the time of her interview Somalia was considered a failed state

(Bruton, 2010), as well as one of the poorest (United Nations, 2010) and most violent (Bruton, 2010) countries in the world.

However, with the positive aspects of extended family members like grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins being very involved in children's daily lives, there came tradeoffs as well. Even though living with more family members meant feeling loved by a lot of different people, some believed this also meant parents gave their children a lot less attention than parents in the U.S. Aamina described these tradeoffs of having family involved, as well as the culture of Ethiopia not being very centered on children.

Back home it's not about *hating* children, but they don't give them that much attention. But [Gabra would] have a lot of love maybe from every family member, from uncles and aunts, something like that [in Ethiopia].

Because of her involvement with CPS, and mandatory parenting classes she completed, Aamina was very much aware of the importance of interacting with, and spending time with children.

Despite being geographically separated and not living in the same country, many mothers continued to rely on their families of origin for support in raising their children. Talking with their mothers and other family members helped ease the stress of parenting in the U.S. Many of these interactions were related to providing emotional support regarding the transition to parenthood, particularly in a new culture. Three years after she arrived from Ethiopia, Yenee and her husband divorced. A few years later she met her son Lebna's father. However when Lebna was 14 months they separated. Lebna's father paid child support off and on for the nearly five years of Lebna's life. At the time of the interview he had visitation rights, and would spend Sundays and Mondays with Lebna.

Consequently, Yenee was consistently under a lot of stress working to support and take care of her son and herself. She often turned to her mother who was still in Ethiopia for words of encouragement. Yenee described this support.

My mom, she listens and keeps telling me her experience. ‘Only a few more years, he’ll walk, he’ll talk, and he can understand you. Once he starts to understand he will see what you have been through. So the way you are caring for me, he is going to care for you,’ and that way I say thank god.

Yenee and her mother would speak twice a week and she generally always felt better after getting off the phone with her. In contrast there were a few mothers who did not utilize their own parents for emotional support because they did not want their parents to be worried about them. Teresa described only telling her mother certain things about her life, and relying on friends for “talking about [her] problems”.

Mothers regularly looked to their families for not only emotional support but also for advice on many things related to their children. Mothers’ trusted their parents’ insight, and many mothers did not think they had anyone else they could ask. Guadalupe who had been in the U.S. five years when she was interviewed was one of the few mothers who came to the U.S. on her own volition. She emigrated from El Salvador for economic reasons, or “because of the poverty” in her COO. Guadalupe came to Washington, DC to reunite with a classmate from El Salvador—her current partner and father of her son—after living for a year in Houston. All of her family except for one cousin remained in El Salvador. Guadalupe described how she and her partner consistently asked her parents for advice regarding their son.

When we don’t know if [our son] has diarrhea or the flu we grab the phone and we talk to our parents and they tell us to make him soup. We have learned to take care of our child through them because we don’t have anyone else to ask.

Sometimes when mothers called their parents who were still in their COO for parenting advice their parents' ideas conflicted with common American beliefs or what the children's American pediatricians recommended. When this occurred some mothers heeded their parents' advice while others followed what their children's doctor or other experts recommended, and often told their parents about these ideas. In fact Perla, an older mother from Mexico, who seemed to utilize every possible parenting support she could find, even discussed parenting classes she was taking in the U.S. with her mother. Perla's mother responded by telling her that she wished she had the opportunity to take classes when Perla was young. Consequently, in some cases participants' families' ideas of parenting were shaped by their daughters' raising children in a new culture. This was particularly true when advice mothers received from family in their COO differed from accepted ideas and practices in the U.S.

When Baduwa's son would not sleep in his own bed, she called her mother in Ghana and asked her what to do. Her mom told Baduwa that children in Ghana also come to their parents' bed and want to sleep with them, so what Baduwa should do is let her son sleep on her so he knows that she is protecting him. Baduwa explained to her mother based on advice from an American pediatrician that, "it's different here. He has to go to his own bed. And I told him that's your bed. You do not need to get up and come to me. So he understands it now." Despite conflicting with her mother's advice, Baduwa continued to follow the advice of her U.S. pediatrician in relation to her son's sleep habits.

Some of these conflicts in child rearing ideas actually occurred in mothers' COOs when mothers visited home and family observed their interactions with their children.

Because of Aamina's experiences with parenting education she was aware of developmentally appropriate ways of interacting with her daughter, Gabra, including talking with her to promote her language development. However, when Aamina visited family in Ethiopia a couple of months before she was interviewed, they questioned the way she was interacting with her daughter.

...like last month, in December when we went to Ethiopia and [my family] don't believe Gabra is three because of the way she talks. And they said to me, 'why do you talk to her like an adult? She's a baby, she's three years old. Why do you talk to her like she's an adult?' They thought I should tell her to stop. They don't pay too much attention to kids. Like they love the kids-maybe it is because they do not have a lot of education, I don't know.

Aamina struggled with the differences in parenting ideas and practices she and her family in Ethiopia had regarding raising children. She indicated that her family believed parents did not need to interact very much with young children. However Aamina learned through parenting classes in the U.S. the importance of talking to and playing with children—even when they are babies and toddlers. Aamina continued to interact with her daughter in ways that she had learned from her parenting classes in the U.S. despite her family's comments. Ultimately, Aamina did not usually turn to her parents for advice because it often conflicted with what she was learning in the U.S.

Other times when expert advice and ideas and practices of COOs conflicted, mothers followed the advice of their mothers and families in their home cultures. Usually this was related to health treatments, and specifically mothers wanting to use more natural or homeopathic remedies than what U.S. pediatricians recommended. For example, Samira's son was born with Hirschsprung's disease, a condition that affects motility in the intestines. He had two surgeries in his first year of life—the first being a

colostomy and the second to remove the damaged part of the intestine—to correct the issue. During the midst of these surgeries and her son’s recovery, Samira was in regular communication with her mother in Sudan. Following the surgeries, the pediatrician recommended her son utilize Mirolax, an over the counter laxative, on a regular basis. Samira confessed to listening to her mother’s advice, “When I asked my mom...she told me about many things to use to help him, you know. It’s natural, like some food...you know, sometimes it’s better than the Mirolax. [Plus], taking too much Mirolax has side effects.” In the end, Samira continued to use the remedies her mother recommended despite this not being the recommendation of her pediatrician.

Consequently, family members who still resided in mothers’ COOs were fairly influential on the ways that mothers thought about parenting their children in the U.S. Some participants were more reliant on their families, and specifically their mothers in their COOs for advice and support, and spoke with them multiple times per week. Others spoke less frequently, and did not ask their parents for their advice regarding parenting, because they did not always agree them. This is why Aamina did not contact her parents for advice. In addition to criticizing the ways Aamina interacted with Gabra, while they were visiting Ethiopia, her mother also advised her on Gabra’s religious upbringing. Consequently, Aamina did not talk to her mother about raising her daughter Gabra because her mother disapproved of Aamina not bringing Gabra to church regularly. Her mom would say, “you have to take [Gabra] to church. God will do everything for her if you are taking her to church.” Aamina had stopped going to church because the closest Ethiopian church was 40 minutes away from her home. However she planned to resume

going again after things with her estranged husband were resolved—in the meantime she did not want to hear advice from her mother.

Given the role that families played in many of these mothers' lives as well as the general cultural value for families in their COOs many mothers discussed wanting their children to “learn to be united” or maintain togetherness with their families. They spoke specifically about their children remaining close to one another as well as with their parents, and developing respect for elders, especially older adults in their families. Mothers mentioned that they did not see solid togetherness among some American families and wanted to be sure their children were raised with this value. Isabel noted this,

...what I have noticed is that a lot of kids separate from their parents as they get older. I want my daughters to be very close with one another. Even now that they are young, they depend a lot on one another and I want them to always be that way, and become even closer as they get older.

Despite having a son in Mexico, Isabel did not mention that it was important for her daughters to develop their relationship with him.

Mothers believed family relationships were particularly important because, as Viviana described, “your family is always there when you need it, your friends are not always there when you need them. That’s the way it works.” Viviana was a mother of four children who relied heavily on her mother to care for her children. In fact we met Viviana at her mother’s house for the interview as it was close to campus, and she was going there to pick up her children at the end of a work day. Viviana’s mother was very supportive of her daughter’s needs in terms of her four children. However their

relationships was somewhat strained because they were separated for so much of Viviana's childhood

In addition to receiving advice from parents and families in their COOs, some mothers mentioned their awareness of important parenting ideas and practices in their COOs because of how their parents raised them. Consequently, some mothers planned to model their own parenting after the way their parents had raised them. When Sana was asked about receiving parenting advice, she indicated that she did not ask anyone for advice because, "I see the way my mom raise me, and I remember that way, and I want to raise my children the way my mom raised me." She went on to describe how her mother taught her to be independent, only turning to family for support if necessary. "If you are hungry, do not ask a neighbor or a stranger, that is what she taught me—ask those who are close to you, like your husband or sister, not a stranger."

In addition to family, African mothers discussed the role of the community and specifically neighbors in child rearing in their COOs. Their thoughts on community involvement in child rearing very much reflected the old African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child". Neighbors and communities were generally involved in the raising of children, as Sharon described,

But back home it's like all hands on deck. Even if it's not my child I can tell that child, 'hey, that's not how you behave or talk to an elder,' and it would not be an issue. Like the saying goes, 'it takes a village to raise a kid,' it's more practical back home. Yea, it really takes a village because even if your mom is not around, you are still afraid to do something that is dangerous because if they see you they are going to tell your mom...and you are going to be in trouble.

This notion of the village caring for children enabled parents to feel comfortable letting their children play outside even if they were not there. Mothers described children

playing outside all day in their COO, as well as leaving their children with neighbors while they went to the store or on another errand away from the house. They believed these relationships among neighbors and communities were so strong because peoples' homes were close together with open space for children to play, and parents had reasons to spend time outside during their daily routines, creating opportunities to socialize. In fact, one parent mentioned that if they did not see a neighbor everyday, they would call to be sure they were okay, because it was so common to see neighbors on a daily basis. Serwa spent time raising her oldest two daughters in Ghana before she and her husband immigrated to the U.S. Because of visa issues her daughters remained in Ghana for seven years before they were able to join their parents in the U.S. Serwa described her experiences with community support of her parenting in Ghana.

Ghana, our community is not like this...not apartments. We have houses but it's open. We have a big compound, so kids from another house, another compound can play together. We play together in Africa. But here it's not like that. They play together and everybody likes each other...here it is difficult because we can't take our kids to stay with a friend and go, you can go to the market, go to the farm, and do something. Come back and take your kids. She doesn't charge you, she won't charge you...In Ghana we have like water, we have pipes outside...we have to take our bikes and fetch water, so there are more chances [to meet].

A Serwa noted, more chances to meet neighbors via families' daily routines was an key aspect of creating relationships with neighbors.

Given the role of community in these mothers' COOs, adjusting to living in an apartment where mothers did not know and consequently did not trust their neighbors, was a struggle for most. Mothers noted that because children in their COOs played outside more, they spent less time in organized activities than children do in the U.S. Not only was this less expensive but it was far more convenient than carting children to a

variety of different activities each day. Also, there were always enough children to play with in their neighborhoods that enrolling in these activities for social reasons was not necessary. Mothers new to the U.S. really wrestled with not being able to just let their children run free outside because of limited community support and the logistics of living in an apartment without a backyard.

Many mothers discussed the loss of the physical support, mainly including child care, from their families and communities in their COOs. Without these sources of support to help take care of children, by default parents spent more time in direct interaction with their children, and utilized institutions that support families and children more than in their COOs. “Back home” they could easily leave their children with family or neighbors. Mothers described the amount of time parents spend with their children in the U.S. as being an important parenting practice. Makeda immigrated to the U.S. to reunify with her mother who had been living in the U.S. for five years. She left Ethiopia when Makeda was 12 years old for better economic opportunities in the U.S. It was not until Makeda was 17 that her mother was able to get the appropriate visa documentation to bring her to the U.S. Makeda, who had one daughter, had the physical support of her mother in the U.S. as she lived nearby. Makeda described liking the U.S. better because she had the opportunity to really contribute to her daughter’s learning.

I like it here, I don’t know why. Because back home if you have a large family, you can leave [your children] and you can go everywhere, and you can come back, but you can’t give them time to teach or learn from you. If you have a child in this country, you can have a chance to teach them how to learn, how to go to school, everything like that, you are going to teach them.

What is noteworthy is that Makeda’s mother was very much physically involved in the care of Makeda’s daughter, but she felt as though she had greater opportunities in the

U.S. to shape her daughter's development than if her entire family were involved back home.

In general participants liked the idea of being involved with and focused on their children and spending all their free time with their children, because it gave them a unique opportunity to really influence their children's learning experiences. Many parents talked about the importance of negotiating work schedules such that they could spend more time with their children. Parents did this by working opposite schedules from their spouses and working reduced schedules. Emilia decided to work fewer hours so she had more time to spend with her children. "Spending time with my kids, that's why I am not working more. We like to spend time with the kids. And on the weekends we try to take them out, yea, we try to be with them." Specifically, the practice of spending time with and prioritizing children was seen by participants as something very much emphasized in the U.S.

Mothers appreciated having information readily available through a variety of media to learn about parenting in the U.S. Perla went on to mention that she was, "involved in parenting classes because I learn all the time. I have been taking them since Rosa was two years old and I always learn...I take tips and modify what I already know." Other parents, learned about parenting ideas and practices in the U.S. through interactions with their children's ECCE program. Usually these ideas and practices were specifically related to education, as Serwa noted, "Head Start helped me to know how to help my kids [before Kindergarten]...how to help them with their homework. Now she knows abc's, 123's, her name, her address, yeah."

As mothers negotiated parenting in the U.S. and having sole responsibility for their children, they fostered their own independence. However, independence was not only a skill mothers developed for themselves, in terms of raising their children in the U.S. without traditional familial support, but it was a skill *and* a value that many were committed to instilling in their children. Some parents believed this was important so female children learned not to depend on men as they got older. This was particularly recognized by single mothers, and reflected dramatic shifts in cultural values like *marianismo* among Latinas. Other mothers discussed children being independent such that they learned not to depend on their parents. Guadalupe indicated that she liked her children being raised in the U.S.

...here mostly the kids since they are little they are taught to be independent and [in my country] they are more dependent on their mothers and fathers. You don't ever want to leave the comfort of your [parents'] home and kids here are taught to be independent.

Guadalupe's worry was that her son might not grow up to be independent enough to leave their home. This idea was corroborated by mothers who felt that because children spent so much time with their parents in the U.S., and had far less freedom to be outside by themselves, development of independence might be hindered. In contrast, some parents worried about their children becoming too independent because they believed it led to too much freedom at an early age, which might get children in trouble. One parent remarked that 11 and 12 year old children in the U.S. are doing things that 18 and 19 year olds do in their COO.

In sum, mothers described the familial and community responsibilities for raising children in their COOs. In many ways mothers still relied on this family support—not physically—but emotionally and in terms of advice. Learning to take on the full

emotional and physical responsibilities of parenting was a challenging adjustment that mothers made when they came to the U.S. Mothers continued to rely on their parents and family for advice regarding ideas and practices from their COOs, but they did not always heed this advice. Sometimes ideas from their COOs conflicted with ideas they learned in the U.S. Mothers wrestled with these conflicts in relation to a variety of parenting ideas and practices including sleep, health, and religion. Mothers relied on other parents, parenting classes, their children's ECCE programs, books and other media to learn about parenting in the U.S.

Building responsive relationships: Corporal punishment versus reciprocal communication. Another area of parenting that mothers struggled with in terms of life in their COO being different than life in the U.S. was regarding building responsive relationships with their children. A number of mothers discussed the role of corporal punishment in discipline strategies of parents in their COOs—this was experienced by both Latin American and African parents. This practice was fairly common. Aamina mentioned that if children were well behaved and had good manners, it was assumed that their parents must hit them. Many mothers experienced being hit or beaten if they did something wrong as children, and in some cases this abuse was even sanctioned in schools---meaning teachers could hit children to punish them. Corporal punishment was widely accepted as a method for teaching children respect for adults in many of these parents' COOs, so much so that parents could hit their children in public without any recourse. Amira, a mother of two daughters, immigrated to the U.S. from Eritrea when she was 19, nine years before she was interviewed. After marrying her husband she

followed him back to the U.S. where he already lived for 12 years. She discussed the acceptance of hitting children in public to discipline them in Eritrea.

But back home you can hit them outside then inside. No one controls you. If children make a mistake here in a shopping center or something you just tell them, 'don't do that.' Back home if you make a mistake as a kid, you get hit...in my country you can hit your child.

Mothers indicated not wanting to use corporal punishment with their children, as their parents had with them. Mercedes had a long history of being hit by someone she loved. Her mother hit her as a child, and when she arrived in the U.S. her baby's father, who was more than twice her age began to physically abuse her. Mercedes described how her mother would "hit first and ask questions later," further explaining that parents she knew growing up "did not speak with their mouths, but would teach by hitting." Mercedes planned to compensate for what she missed as child, and as an adult in terms of being in a loving relationship, by doing the opposite of her mother in terms of child rearing. Esmeralda, who mentioned that she would learn how to parent as her "daughter grows," because she "didn't have good parents," described her experiences as a child with an abusive father and a mother who was some what neglectful. "My dad was a drunk and he would hit me and my mom would let him...where I grew up, you wouldn't find a good father..."

There were mothers who planned to do some things as their parents had and change some things because they did not agree with certain ways their parents raised them. For example, Daniela mentioned teaching her children some of the same values that she learned as a child in El Salvador. However, she is teaching them to her children in different ways than her parents taught her.

I feel that my parents were good parents. The bad thing was that they went their own way...that is the difference that maybe in your own country you learn by beatings. Despite that, I feel my parents were good parents. Now what I have learned and the good qualities I have are from them and no one else...Whatever my parents taught me, I taught my children but in a different way. It is better for them, not hitting or mistreating them in a certain way. I learned these things and appreciated it but not in the way in which it was taught to me.

When Amira explained the use of corporal punishment in Eritrea, and its acceptance in both the privacy of families' homes and in public spaces, she seemed to struggle with it not being an acceptable practice in the U.S. When asked whether it was difficult to raise her children in the U.S. without being able to spank them she shared the following.

I like this country but... sometimes, sometimes you need to hit them. Yea, sometimes. But it's okay, this country is good to raise your children too. You can talk to them, they can listen to you. But in my country you can hit your child.

Despite following the accepted practices in the U.S. Amira still believed that sometimes hitting children was necessary. For Amira this negotiation of how to be a responsive and effective parent to her daughters was on-going.

Although Viviana knew from parenting classes that corporal punishment was not how she should discipline her children, she struggled with this, particularly with her oldest daughter who was in pre-adolescence. She explained how she learned to use other discipline techniques, but that breaking the cycle of spanking seemed to be particularly difficult for her. It was still in her repertoire of discipline techniques.

Because there is a lot of information, a lot of influence, like in the school. Like I said sometimes right, sometimes wrong, like [my children] say your parents cannot spank you because you can call the police, the kids, you know...one time my daughter did that to me, and...because that time she was screaming back to me and I said you are not supposed to scream, you are supposed to respect...okay I get the belt and I am going to teach you another way and she said, 'you are not

supposed to hit me because I am going to call the police.’ You know it’s like a trick you show them...so that’s what I told her, ‘that’s fine’ I said, ‘you call them’ because she told me, ‘I saw a sign that talk about the law, that you are not supposed to...’ and I say ‘that’s the part I don’t like’ because you know...you have to discipline, but it is not all the time hitting...they like the TV I take away the TV, they like...right now the cell phone is making them crazy... I got it and basically what I do is take what they like is two different ways, and I am not going to lie sometimes I have to be hard with him, hit but not the way they do it to me. I spank them or go over there you are going to sit down or I am going to talk in a strong voice. The other way is like I said, take away what they like, and also if they do good they have a prize...

Viviana was not very happy or proud of how she disciplined her children and emphasized that she was constantly trying to learn new discipline techniques and not fall back into patterns she learned in her COO. She relied immensely on a friend, who taught parenting classes, to advise her on interacting with and disciplining her daughter in ways that did not involve spanking. Specifically after challenging interactions with her daughter Viviana would call her friend and ask how she could do things differently next time. Like Amira, Viviana consistently negotiated what she believed was best for her children in terms of being a responsive parent, teaching her children open communication, and how she was raised in El Salvador amidst the acceptance of corporal punishment.

Many mothers relied on the advice and ideas of their parents from their COOs regarding other parenting issues, some mothers deliberately did not ask their parents for advice regarding discipline. They avoided these conversations because they felt as though their parents shamed them regarding choices they were making in relation to their children. Isabel, did not call her sister for advice—Isabel’s sister raised her because their parents were killed in a car accident when Isabel was a child-- because they had different ideas regarding discipline. Isabel described her sister as a “pushover” and that she would

“scold” Isabel for disciplining her daughter who has leukemia, saying she should not punish her because she is sick.

Since most mothers seldom turned to their own parents or families for advice on discipline they found other ways of learning how to discipline their children in the U.S. The most common way that participants learned about interacting with and disciplining children in the U.S. was by observing and asking other parents. Often when participants watched what others parents did with their children, they learned from these experiences because what their friends did was *not* successful. Esmeralda described this type of experience, “I learn from looking at other parents and how they treat their children. That is my way of learning how to treat my daughter... I see parents who are very mean to their children, but [children] understand if you are nice to them.” Other parents explicitly asked friends for advice and then drew their own conclusions of what to do with their children depending on the situation. Perla said, “You can learn from parents that have been through the same experience and maybe it is something simple.”

In addition to talking with friends, some parents relied on reading books, watching videos, and taking classes to learn about parenting ideas and practices in the U.S. They mentioned that reading and taking classes helped parents in “not repeating whatever happened to you.” Perla went on to explain how she took ideas from Mexico and from the U.S. to create a new space for parenting as a Mexican mother raising her children in the U.S.

In Mexico I think we are raised in many beliefs. Such as your grandmother said this so I believe this so I am going to educate you this way cause your grandmother said, and so you have to give it to your children. I have taken what has worked for me-- certain things I take if I think they are correct and they work but other things I learn from other parents or from parenting classes that is why I

am always involved in parenting classes because I learn all the time...I take tips and I modify what I already know.

Another way of building responsive relationships with their children, which was rooted in U.S. culture that mothers discussed, was reciprocal or bidirectional communication. Mothers noticed creating open lines of communication between parents and children, as well as teaching children how to communicate freely and openly with their parents, peers, and others in their lives as something that was emphasized in U.S. culture. For some parents this meant openly talking about things with their children that were not generally discussed with children in their COOs. Viviana mentioned that when her daughter got older she would talk to her about all types of teen issues including sex and menstruation, which her own parents never discussed with her as a youth. She described how little her aunt and mother told her as child, what she learned through parenting classes in the U.S., and what she was planning on sharing with her own children.

...here they teach us to be more communicative...probably not everybody from my age, but a lot of friends of mine in El Salvador said the same thing, they don't know how to communicate...I changed the way I talk to my kids. Here I try to have open communication with my kids and not hit.

Despite wanting to have open lines of communication with her daughter, this was challenging for Viviana as this is not how she was raised. In fact, Viviana considered reducing her use of corporal punishment and increasing open communication with her children to be the most challenging aspects of parenting in the U.S. At the time of the interview Viviana was still in the midst of negotiating how to be a consistently responsive mother to her children.

In addition, mothers mentioned the importance of their children developing respect for other individuals and more specifically, for elders. However despite wanting children to learn this value mothers struggled with worrying their children would become too timid. Sharon discussed balancing these two notions of wanting her children to develop respect for their elders but also learning to be confident.

Our kids back home...are more calm and they are more respectful when dealing with elders. It's good and it's not good, because sometimes I think kids end up being timid...we wish to push them to grow up to be confident people but also to be respectful and to know how to handle themselves, how to talk to elders.

Sharon went on to mention a recent story in the news to illustrate the difference between Ghana and the U.S. in terms of respect for elders.

Yea about respect, talking back, all this. It was like in the news the other day, a grandmother slapped her granddaughter and the granddaughter called the... Yea, she called the cops on her grandmother...[the grandmother] was put in jail or something because...That would never happen in Ghana, that would never happen. That would never happen in Ghana. That, to disrespect your grandmother, oh my God...Just that disrespecting... first of all would not be a police issue, and if your grandmother, if it was just you and you told somebody else in the family, you get in trouble for that. That's how much we value respect. Today to leave your grandmother alone you have to buy a goat, cause that's how huge it is!

Sharon noted how engrained respect of elders is in Ghana by describing what she would call me as determined by our family relationships. She told me that if we were sisters, and even if I was older by just two years, she would never call me by my "straight name", but rather "sister Colleen". Ultimately Sharon worked to instill a sense of respect for elders in her children, but not to the extreme that she would have if she were raising her children in Ghana.

Mothers reported understanding that corporal punishment was not accepted in mainstream parenting in the U.S. However this was a more difficult habit to break for some mothers than others. Most did not rely on their parents for advice regarding discipline, but rather turned to friends, parenting education, or even popular press to learn ways of disciplining their children without using corporal punishment. In addition mothers were committed to learning how to have two-way communication with their children, and teaching their children how to be open in their communication. Again, this was a struggle for mothers because it was very different from how they were raised and the skills they were taught in their COOs.

Cultural connections: Learning language, religion, and COO traditions. A third area of parenting ideas and practices that mothers discussed was in relation to fostering their children's language development as well as children's religious education. Language acquisition refers to not only the specific skills related to actually speaking a certain language, but also to values, beliefs, and broadly ways of understanding and interpreting the world. Mothers wanted their children to speak their native tongues for a few reasons. First, mothers wanted to be sure that their children would be able to communicate with family members in their COOs. A second reason was so their children would have better job opportunities when they got older. Finally, some mothers mentioned the ability their children would have to help others with translation if they knew a second language. Makeda discussed how important it was for her daughter to know Amharic, the language of her family in Ethiopia.

Amharic, she speaks Amharic perfectly...knowing two languages is good because maybe she can help other people. If they speak Amharic, she can help them. It's good for her too, maybe if she goes back home, if she see's our families maybe.

Language was not simply a utilitarian tool or a skill but it was also a value. Language was used to communicate with and socialize children regarding culture. It provided children access to different ways of thinking including visions of the physical world, the realms of time, history, and memory, conceptualization of emotions, and broad frameworks for shared religious beliefs. A less common reason that mothers wanted their children to learn a certain language was so they could practice their families' religions appropriately. Manal, who was a Muslim from Morocco, and had been in the U.S. five years at the time of the interview, described teaching her son Arabic so he could read the Q'ran. She mentioned that when he and his two younger siblings were older she would send them to the local Islamic school to continue to learn how to read, speak, and write Arabic.

Many mothers from Africa and a couple mothers from Latin America discussed the importance of children learning their families' religious beliefs. For some parents religion and faith were a large part of their world views and how they coped with life. For example each time I saw Sisi at River Banks and asked her how everything was going she would always tell me something positive or hopeful followed by the statement, "by the grace of God," indicating that her life was in God's hands. Sisi, who was originally from Ghana and had two daughters, described the sense of pride she felt when her older daughter asked if she could stay inside to pray rather than go outside to play. Sisi believed many things would just fall into place, "by the grace of God". Mothers wanted their children to maintain their faith and religion because not only was this part of their culture but also they believed religion would teach their children good morals and values. Both Christian and Muslim parents thought religion would make their children

“better people.” Yenee described how instilling religious faith in her son would help ensure goodness in him.

...they discipline you, they teach you The Bible. I would love my son to go through that program...here there are some bad kids, and you never know where my son [will] end up. But like I said with prayer and if you go through that program, that service every week, maybe something will click in [my son's] mind.

However there were mothers like Aamina who were not as religiously devout as their families in their COOs wanted. In turn, she avoided talking to her parents about parenting because of the advice they would constantly provide her regarding bringing her daughter, Gabra, to church.

In addition to language and religion, parents expressed a desire for their children to maintain some of their families' cultural traditions including eating food from their COOs, as well as learning traditional dances and celebrating certain holidays from their COOs. Many parents cooked traditional food from their COOs on a daily basis, as well as provided children with American dishes that they liked—particularly things that children tasted in their ECCE program and asked their parents to make at home. Other parents talked about wanting their children to experience certain holiday celebrations, which usually involved wearing traditional dress and dancing. Valeria described celebrating a certain holiday on December 12th as they would in Mexico.

...they are now beginning to celebrate this but in Mexico because we are Catholic we believe in the virgin so each year I dress them like “inditos” similar to Juan Diego that is what we call him and my little girl dresses in a long skirt, braids, and she carries a basket, and my little boy is the same carries a bag with fruit or flowers and a sombrero and that is a tradition that comes from Mexico...we call them “inditos” and every year thousands of people dress like this on December 12th.

Language, religion, and cultural traditions were all aspects of mothers COOs that they hoped their children would maintain despite being raised in a new country. These traditions reflected and supported certain values that mothers hope to instill in their children, including the importance of language to culture and being able to communicate with one's family of origin, as well as developing religious faith and understanding various cultural traditions.

Gender roles: Mothers, fathers, and children. When mothers arrived to the U.S. and became parents many experienced shifts in gender roles, from abiding by more traditional expectations to more contemporary expectations. The roles of parents in mothers' COOs were fairly traditional, although many had seen tremendous changes in opportunities for women in their COOs throughout their lives. Generally, mothers in their COOs were not employed outside their homes, but rather stayed at home and cared for the children, and fathers worked outside of the homes and were financially responsible for families. Isabel described these roles in Mexico, which was very similar to how other mothers from Latin America and from Africa also described mothers' and fathers' roles.

For the most part the mom is always home with the kids. And a good mom is the one that is conscious of the kids--gives them food but also at a very age teaches them what's right and what's not. The mom is basically just home and the dad for the most part is who's in control. The mom is the one who takes care of things at school though. If the kid did something at school, mom is who responds. Father rarely plays a role in the education aspect of the kid's life. He only goes out in the field or wherever he works, works, brings home money, and leaves. I've always noticed the mom handles everything else.

Mothers indicated that the way both men and women contributed custodially and financially to the raising of children in the U.S. was how they wanted to raise their children in the U.S. Sofia was a mother two from El Salvador, whose husband was

bathing, dressing, and feeding the children as she was being interviewed. Sofia's husband contributed a lot more than just helping to pay the bills to their children's lives. Elsa contrasted what is expected of men in El Salvador versus what she thought was better based on U.S. ideals.

Well, over there...[men] think that the mom will always give them everything. I think that the majority of fathers well the ones that I know, they just go to work and work for their children. According to them they are giving their kids a lot but I don't think that is right. I think that is wrong because they are always busy [with their jobs]. They don't go to parent meetings about their kids because that is not a thing that men do--only women do it. The majority that go to these meetings are the mother and thing is that it shouldn't only be the mother's responsibility. I think it is due to the "machismo" idea that they don't take responsibility. The mothers are always the ones involved and it is much different. Generally it has to be both parents-- not just one-- it should be both. I think that is how it should be.

Some mothers were unable to attend school on a daily basis in their COO because the school was either too far away or some girls were not allowed to attend school because they needed to help with housework and farm work. Mothers were very happy their daughters were being raised in the U.S. where their opportunities to go to school would not be stolen, as they were for mothers like Esmeralda. At the age of six Esmeralda was picking vegetables, and was essentially not allowed to pursue education after second grade. This is not what she wanted for her daughter.

I didn't [finish school]. I went up to second grade. Yes, I have always worked. I would work with my parents and it's the same as North Carolina you cut tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers.

Isabel further explained what life was like for girls in Mexico.

And fathers are especially tough on their daughters. As a [girl] they expect you to care for the house and if your dad says "go out" you go out even if you have to do homework. And if they gave you permission to go somewhere, you got permission and if they didn't then you stayed [home]. Fathers over there give more freedom to their sons than their daughters. It's almost as though males are

worth more and so they can do whatever they want and be wherever they want to be. Not women though, you always have to be home, following whatever mom and dad tell you do. And if you do anything other than what they tell you to then it's a mess and everyone's suddenly criticizing you. Over there, it seems as though they are more controlling and unfair. They always make the men first priority and always leave us women for last.

Despite evidence of many mothers' shifts from traditional to more contemporary gender roles there were some mothers who created more traditionally gendered homes. Sana, who held quite a bit of nostalgia for Somalia, was very much committed to raising her children exactly as her mother had. Part of this meant being a stay-at-home mother. In turn, when the first of her four daughters were born Sana began to fulfill this ideal and did not pursue the medical degree she began in Somalia. Her philosophy regarding this was, "I put all my life and my dreams on hold [for them], and I hope my dreams will come true tomorrow." She believed her daughters would be financially successful and would "take care of [her]" when she is older.

In the U.S. many mothers began to assume non-traditional gender roles. Even mothers who did not work and chose to be home with their children at the time of the study, had plans to return to work and/or school once their children were enrolled in public elementary school. In addition mothers hoped to teach their daughters to be independent so they did not ever need to rely on a man for support. However there were some mothers who clung to more traditional gender ideals as they parented their children in the U.S. with a lot of nostalgia for back home.

In sum, the parenting ideas and practices that mothers grappled with the most were related to: responsibility for raising their children; building responsive relationships with their children; creating cultural connections to their COOs for their children; and,

grappling with the gendered nature of mothering as it is shaped by the new host society. These reflected ideas and practices mothers hoped to use to instill certain skills and values from both their COOs and the U.S. These skills and values included independence, communication, bilingualism, religion, cultural traditions, and importance of family relationships, which were a combination of ideas from their COOs and the U.S. However the parenting practices or strategies that parents believed were best to use with their children to teach these skills and values were ones they developed while in the U.S. These included spending time with children, non-traditional gender roles among parents, and authoritative discipline techniques including reciprocal communication.

Mothers' parenting in the U.S. reflected creations of a new framework for parenting in the U.S. that reflected a coming together of various aspects of parenting ideas and practices from both their COOs and new host society. In particular, mothers discussed ways of interacting with their children that were different than how they would interact in their COOs, but also different than the ways native-born parents interacted with their children. Halima described acting "more Egyptian" in the U.S. than she would in Egypt so that her children were certain to maintain aspects of their mother's culture despite not being raised in her COO. However, by doing this, her parenting also did not always reflect mainstream U.S. values. Consequently, this new framework of parenting was not a combination of skills, values, and practices that fully mirrored parenting in the U.S. or in mothers' COOs.

Role of Context

There were multiple aspects of the sociostructural context in the U.S. that either supported or deterred putting into action the ideas mothers had for how they were going

to raise their children in a new host society. The characteristics of the context that seemed to shape mothers experiences the most were supports related to parenting including developing bilingualism in their children, education for their children, and parenting education opportunities particularly in relation to discipline techniques. However, there were aspects of the context in the U.S. that made things slightly more challenging for mothers to raise their children as they anticipated, including, the need for both parents to be employed outside the home and having limited family support available in the U.S.

Nearly all mothers intended to facilitate their children's learning of languages from their COOs. For many this was challenging because as children came in contact with the English speaking world, particularly through attending ECCE programs that were primarily English speaking, their desires and abilities to speak their parents' native languages often diminished. This was especially true among African parents who often had fairly strong English language skills. If their children spoke to them in English, refusing to speak the language of their COO, African parents were able to understand and respond to their children. Despite these challenges in terms of encouraging their children to speak the languages of their COOs, parents were committed to their children being bilingual so many sought the help of teachers and schools. Some mothers utilized their children's ECCE program as well as their older children's schools to figure out how to continue to encourage their children to speak their parents' native tongue even as they were being exposed to more and more English. Alejandra explained how her daughter's teacher worked with her to help encourage her daughter to continue to speak Spanish.

I told her teacher, 'look,' I said, 'I am having a problem with Melissa because she doesn't want to read Spanish...I am trying to teach her Spanish.' I told her. She

said, ‘come, come, Melissa. Your mother is going to teach you how to read in Spanish...and you are going to teach her to read in English. You have to let your mother teach you Spanish. You are going to speak well in two languages,’ she tells her. ’

After the teacher spoke with Alejandra’s daughter, she no longer “complained” about learning and speaking Spanish. In addition, some of the ECCE programs that children used were bilingual—generally, they were Spanish and English, so non-Spanish speaking families’ languages were not necessarily supported through these types of preschools.

For other mothers their desires to have their children learn their native tongues were fulfilled by the availability of language schools where they could send their children to learn to speak languages from their COOs, as well as to read and write these languages. Some mothers utilized these schools when their children were in preschool, and others planned to enroll their children later when they were school age. Generally, these language schools not only taught children the languages of their COOs but they also imparted to children the customs and traditions of particular countries and regions of the world. Finally, even with all the supports available in the context of the U.S. many mothers found it very difficult to foster and maintain their children’s abilities to speak languages from their COOs. Maria explained some of these challenges.

Yes, I want him to speak Spanish. Yes, we all speak to him in Spanish here, but he is forgetting to say things like the colors in Spanish, and sometimes when he wants to say ‘straw’ he doesn’t say ‘pajilla’ he says, ‘give me the straw,’ or ‘I don’t know how it is called.’ Yes, the language I don’t want him to lose it...in the house we only speak Spanish to him, even the TV was in Spanish...but now that he goes to school he watches more TV in English than before....so I tell him, ‘Emanuel don’t speak to me in English, I don’t understand.’ He says, ‘no mom, I will speak to you in English.’

Emanuel’s outright refusal to speak Spanish made things particularly difficult for Maria.

In addition to supports for learning their parents' native tongues mothers thought there was a lot of support for their goals for their children related to education. For many mothers the opportunities for their children to go to preschool and school for free were important supports for their desires for their children to be educated. Mothers indicated that in their COOs attending preschool would have cost them a lot of money; while other parents mentioned needing to pay for elementary school in their COOs as well. Desta explained that in Ethiopia, "when you have [a lot] of money, you can pay for a good school. In the U.S. you don't pay for school, public school. You don't have money back home, so no choice, you take your child to the neighborhood school."

Interestingly, this seems similar to the experiences families have in the U.S. If the neighborhood schools are not very good, and if families have money to send their children to a private school, they do so. If they do not have the money, then they "have no choice" but to use the neighborhood school. However the difference for Desta was that even though the neighborhood school near their home in the U.S. was not great, they had access to some very good charter schools, which were free. Despite there being limited good public schools where Desta lived in the U.S., there were better free options than what she had in Ethiopia. She saw the U.S. as a better place for her children, in terms of education. Some mothers even mentioned not having access to any school at all in their COOs, particularly if they lived in a remote area of the country where farming was the focus. For example, Esmeralda, who did not go to school past age seven, explained that if she stayed there her daughter would have the same limited opportunities for education as she had. She would be working the fields at age six or seven.

In addition to free education some parents mentioned the importance of having access to the public library system, as Perla described, “they have been visiting the library since they were 6 months old. They would go to story time and get books then too. In Mexico you don’t have that...” Between access to free good preschool and elementary schools as well as public libraries, many mothers believed that the supports for their children’s educational achievement were far greater in the U.S. than in their COOs. For some, waiting for their children to finish their education was the main reason for remaining in the U.S. Sharon explained that she wanted to return to Ghana because life was more relaxing there. However, she wanted to wait until her children finished college in the U.S.

Twenty years from now we will be in Ghana. Yea cause it’s nice here but we don’t want to grow old here. We don’t want to grow old here ‘cause I think it’s easier in Ghana...In 20 years time, if they decide to be here by themselves that will be okay. They can be here by themselves, but we at that time...will be going back home. [My husband] is looking like I think 10 to 15 years. He’s looking much sooner to go back home but I’m looking for them to enter college, maybe when they are in college they can take care of themselves. I want them to finish before I leave. He wants to go sooner [Interviewer: why?] He wants to set up his fashion business. Life back in Ghana is more relaxing as long as you have a good business, there’s not much pressure, it’s more laid back...

Sharon’s husband was hoping to go back to Ghana sooner than Sharon wanted. This difference in opinion in terms of going “back home” was not uncommon among spouses who had any plans of ultimately returning to their COOs. Guadalupe explained justifying to her husband the importance of remaining in the U.S. because of their son’s future.

... [My husband] and I think very differently he says that we are going to leave to El Salvador but we can’t no longer think that way but in our child because he has a future here. Maybe we can’t give him over there what we can give him here... college.

A final sociostructural support that a few parents mentioned in terms of raising their children in the U.S. was access to parenting education and information such that they could learn discipline techniques that did not include corporal punishment. Aamina explained what she learned in parenting classes that helped her avoid unacceptable discipline techniques with Gabra.

Yeah, especially after I took the parenting classes. Because when I came here, I would see some people who have kids, when I go to a restaurant or something. Like when the kids do something, they don't scream at them—they are calm and say, 'Stop it. Okay you did this wrong. Next time I am not going to be able to bring you here.' or something like that. I was like why aren't they yelling? ... And you have to sit there and talk to them. For example in the morning time [Gabra] wants to wear a dress and it is cold outside so I want her to wear pants. If I say, (pretending to shout) 'no, no, no you cannot do this and that,' like I'll be late for work because she won't get that. But before that before morning, in the night, I'll say, "tomorrow you are going to wear these pants." I want to finish with this in the night when I have time, I don't want to argue with her in the morning because outside it is cold, and I have to explain to her like an adult. You have to share your thinking and find out what she is thinking too... Yeah, what she wants to wear—not only for that issue but anything. But if I say, "no you cannot do it because I say so," she doesn't stop so you have to explain to her...

Aamina realized the importance of communicating with Gabra about her expectations for the morning the night before since their mornings were busy. This strategy allowed Gabra to know what was expected of her in the morning, and it kept Aamina from raising her voice or hitting Gabra.

Mothers were involved in parenting classes either through their children's ECCE programs or other community organizations. Often, these programs provided mothers with emotional support for the stresses they faced in their daily lives, as well as information for how to best interact with their children, particularly in terms of discipline. In particular, Mercedes mentioned that if she had the same mentality that she had in El Salvador, she would probably hit her children whenever they did something bad, but by

going to counseling and parenting workshops offered through her children's ECCE program, she learned to talk to her daughters about their behaviors. Mercedes learned how to discipline them by "taking away things that they like rather than using physical punishment."

Despite there being supports for the parenting goals mothers had, there were sociosstructural factors that made parenting in the U.S. particularly challenging for mothers. Specifically, mothers mentioned the amount of time they needed to work outside the home to be able to help financially support their families in the U.S., as well as the limited amount of physical support from family they could access in the U.S. Mothers were very much committed to spending as much time as possible with their children; however with the busy work schedules they all held this was difficult. Isabel described this balancing act.

Oh, it's tough here. What happens is that you get so busy with work. I think that what you have to do is dedicate as much time as possible to your kids because the other time you spend working.

Daniela received her child development associate a couple months before she was interviewed, and rather than applying for an assistant teacher position, she found a part time job as a nanny for a set of twins. She worked 15 hours per week. She was able to spend time with her daughters and continue studying English at a local free charter school. However this meant that her husband needed to work two jobs so they could pay their bills. He had two restaurant jobs, and between these two jobs, he worked from seven or eight o'clock each morning until 11 o'clock each night. When asked about the most challenging aspect of being a mother in the U.S., Daniela described the limited amount of time available.

Time. Dedicating time because...my daughters' father cannot spend time with them because he works all day. Maybe he spends time only in the morning. The girls know that he is in the house when dawn arrives, they do not see him when he arrives at night. The weekends are very short. We used to spend time together on Saturdays and Sundays; we would eat together. Now it's all work... I think that everything depends on your work schedule. If it does not balance with your kids, you won't dedicate time for them.

Together Daniela and her husband decided that he would work two jobs so she could spend more time with the children. Even though this meant more time for Daniela with the children, her husband was unable to spend very much time with them each day and throughout the week.

Mothers enjoyed the empowerment and freedom that they felt by working and going to school. However being busy outside the home and without their children was a challenging adjustment for many mothers because this was not the way their mothers raised them in their COOs. Mothers worked in low wage jobs because of documentation issues, as well as limited educational and experiential backgrounds related to employment, which usually meant either working very long hours or having multiple jobs--both of which left limited time to be with their children and sometimes feelings of stress. This was particularly challenging for mothers like Aamina who was a single mother. When asked about the most challenging aspect of being a mother in the U.S. she responded in the following way.

In the United States, everything you have to do by yourself, and especially when you are a single mom, like when you don't have someone to help you. You have to do it financially, you have to do home cleaning, you have to make sure what your child is doing, and you have to work. You have to have money so you have to work. I mean it's good thing to work and have money, but it stresses you out sometimes.

Moreover, some mothers like Desta used other aspects of the U.S. context, like access to ECCE, to buffer the potential negative aspects of having to work two jobs and not seeing her children enough. She found an excellent preschool that could help raise her children.

I have been able to work two jobs, but I have to be with them to raise them very good. When I was looking for a school I was looking for the best because I was worried about them raising [my children] well.

Many mothers worked, and often had different schedules than their husbands, which meant that the fathers had greater opportunities to be involved with their children. With mothers typically working 3PM to 11PM shifts in their jobs, it was not uncommon for fathers to be responsible for children from three or four in the afternoon until they went to bed, as mothers would work until 10PM or 11PM in the evening. Sometimes during interviews with mothers, if fathers were not working, they were tending to the children—bathing or feeding them, or picking them up from their ECCE programs. I recollect one father brushing and braiding his daughter’s hair as the mother spoke with me.

In addition to challenges related to working outside the home mothers were faced with navigating parenthood in the U.S. without the various types of support of their family, as they would receive in their COOs. Mothers discussed not having their family to rely on as being one of the most significant adjustments to being in the U.S. and to parenting in the U.S. Mothers like Elsa mentioned wanting to bring her family here because she missed their support so much, particularly as a mother. Selena had two children in the U.S. and one son in El Salvador—she explained how her experiences of being a mother in the U.S. compared to mothering in El Salvador.

I have to make sure they go to school, that they eat, what they eat, that they are dressed. Be more alert about them. Over [in El Salvador] too but, over there the difference is that you have family, and sometimes they stay with them so you can go out. And here, there's no one. Here you have to organize yourself well with your work and the school's schedule.

When Selena was interviewed she was not working because she was staying home with her son who was seven months old at the time. However she was preparing to go back to work by the time he was a year old, and hoped to enroll him in La Casita del Saber.

Mothers also struggled to teach their children appropriate values without the helping hands of other family members. For example, Sharon espoused the importance of the ideas reflected in the African proverb, "it takes a village." In relation to this notion, she mentioned that having other family members around and other people and families from her culture in general would help reinforce certain cultural beliefs, rather than only the mother and father doing this.

The sociostructural context for parenting in the U.S. both supported and challenged mothers' goals for parenting. Consequently there were some aspects of mothers' ideas and goals for parenting they were ultimately able to fulfill and other areas that potentially suffered. The final aspect of the model explored the new framework of parenting that mothers created in the U.S., which was based on not only their goals for parenting but also the way these goals were shaped by the context of U.S. society.

Parenting Practices and Experiences in a New Host Society

Mothers' experiences of parenting in the U.S. were different in many ways than what they expected when they first arrived in the U.S. and how they would have parented in their COOs. These differences were not only based on a coming together of ideas

from “back home” but also learning about new ways of mothering children, as well as being in a different context with different supports.

A significant adjustment or shift in the way mothers parented in the U.S. versus in their COOs was their increased reliance on institutional supports for their parenting and a decreased use of family supports. Mothers who needed to work outside the home began to rely on ECCE programs to care for their children, rather than leaving them in the care of family. In addition, as mothers wanted to learn more about parenting practices, they sometimes called their own parents, but many mothers also began to rely on information from their children’s ECCE program, as well as other community agencies that offered parenting workshops and classes. In addition, mothers utilized the public libraries in their areas to support their parenting, particularly in terms of education and fostering their children’s love for books and learning.

This shift to using institutional supports rather than family encompassed not only child care, education, and discipline supports, but also aspects of parenting related to food and housing. Specifically, many mothers referred to being able to rely on their families in their COOs for food and shelter if necessary, but here if they lost their employment or they were not earning enough, relying on their families for financial support was not possible. Consequently, these parents turned to social services, and began to utilize support from Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), Food Stamps, and Section 8 Housing. Parents thought about this in terms of their responsibilities as parents, as Selena described, that here parents have more responsibilities that they are managing without family, but there are also more supports for these increased demands than in their COOs.

In terms of religion, many mothers were able to find faith communities near their homes. Generally, these were places where mothers could not only practice their faiths but usually these were places mothers could connect with others from their COOs. For example, Ethiopian, Sudanese, Somalian, and Egyptian mothers who were all Muslims living in the same community all went to different mosques.

Despite having connections with faith communities some parents were unable to live out their faith as they would in their COOs. There were sometimes conflicts between parents' employment and worship times. Mothers mentioned they would like to go to church but they could not because they worked during the services. Teresa grew up in Argentina where she attended Catholic School. She had such fond memories of this school that she hoped to find a Catholic school in the U.S. that her two daughters could attend. She mentioned that, "she used to go to church all the time [in my country], which I don't do that much now because I am always working. But I wish all the time, I could do it."

For other parents, important aspects of their religions in relation to their daily routines could not be supported in their U.S. communities as they would be in their COOs. Muslim parents were teaching their children as early as age seven to pray and the importance of doing so five times a day. They also had to teach their children how to work around not being able to pray in school, and the importance of going to bed early while in elementary school.

Halima arrived from Egypt 16 years prior to being interviewed for this study. After her first daughter was born in the U.S. she went back to Cairo for a year because she missed home. However her daughter was constantly ill there. Halima returned to the

U.S. indicating that not only was the U.S. better for her children, but after spending time in America, she thought Egypt, and particularly Cairo, was not clean enough for their family. One of the reasons Halima really wanted to return to Egypt was because she missed the culture and hoped her children would learn Arabic and the Q'ran. In turn, she was teaching the children about their Muslim faith and they began incorporating it into their daily routines—but could not do so fully because of school. Halima explained that her children would pray in the morning, miss the second prayer because of school but make it up after school, and then miss the last prayer because it was at nine, after they are already in bed. “The last one is at like nine, and those in elementary school go to sleep and skip it a lot. I don't want to force anything. I do the best I can do.”

Halima also mentioned balancing how much she expected her daughters to adhere to appropriate Muslim dress. Consequently, when her older daughter was in public elementary school during the week she was able to choose whether or not she wanted to wear the hijab, the traditional head scarf worn by Muslim women. However when her daughter attended Arab school on Saturdays her mother insisted she wear the hijab. She explained that she would rather her daughters adhere to the rules of the Muslim faith regarding relations with boys, than wear the hijab and long sleeves at public school and not take her religion seriously.

I want her to wear the head scarf, but you know most of my friends here in America, they forced their daughters to wear the hijab, and long sleeves, but when they go to school, I see girls wearing the hijab and flirting with boys. Because the family forced her to wear it, she is like, ‘okay, I'll wear it, but I'll do whatever I want.’

Creating this compromise with her daughter also opened lines of communication about what was happening in school and her daughter's thought about adhering to aspects of their faith.

Moreover, parents found ways of worshipping in their home rather than in a faith community. For example, Kassa and her children read The Bible every morning when they woke up, and every evening before bed. She noted, "And I explain and teach my kids my religion. I read the Bible...everyday, after sleeping...in the morning too, if we have time." Overall, most parents still practiced their religions and were teaching their children about these faiths as well; however in many cases they needed to adapt the ways that they were doing so based on the context of the U.S.

Parents were very much committed to their children learning and maintaining the language from their COOs. However most parents found trying to raise their children bilingually a challenge particularly as their children began to interact more and more with English-speaking aspects of society. Most mothers adhered to only speaking their native tongues at home, while children practiced English in their ECCE programs. However based on certain circumstances, some parents were unable to do this. For example, Yenee's son had a speech delay so the speech therapist encouraged Yenee to only speak English with her son so he would not be confused. Despite wanting their children to learn their native languages, a few mothers talked about encouraging their children to speak English at home so the parents could practice their English. Only one mother, Sharon, began speaking English with her children from birth rather than the language of her COO because she thought learning English was most important. Sharon regretted

doing this and by the time her children were toddlers and in preschool she and Luke started trying to teach them their native tongues.

In addition to speaking the languages of their COOs at home parents also enrolled their children in schools specifically to support their language development, including bilingual preschools and elementary schools. This was common among Latinos. Using separate language schools on the weekends was customary among Arabic speaking families. Ethiopian families tended to rely on churches and child care for support in teaching their children Amharic. In addition to these outside teaching resources, parents also bought books and videos to support their children's development of bilingualism. Also, when it was possible, based on finances, documentation, and situations in their COOs parents travelled back to their COOs where their children could experience their families' cultures as well as practice their language skills. Overall many of the children were being raised bilingually and like most parents trying to do this they faced challenges. In particular, once their children were enrolled in English speaking preschools and elementary schools they often chose to speak English with their siblings and their peers, and sometimes to their parents--especially if they knew their parents understood or were learning English.

Children's fathers were involved with their children in a greater amount of day-to-day child care than they would have been in their COOs because mothers worked. Both parents worked, particularly among Latino families, who were generally employed in low wage work, which they could obtain without having appropriate documentation. Parents often worked opposite schedules, with fathers generally leaving for work around four or five in the morning and returning home around three in the afternoon, and mothers

working 3 to 11 shifts into the evening. Parents did this to save money on ECCE while earning more money since both parents were working. Sofia, whose husband was bathing both children and caring for them when Sofia was being interviewed, explained this transition to having fathers participate more in the day-to-day responsibilities of caring for the children.

But I think mothers have to talk to the husband and tell them that they have to help more with the children. For example, he helps me and between [caring for] the two [children] we do things around the house. We drop off our son and one of us will go pick him up. He isn't just my son, he is also his son too. He has the right to go to the teacher and ask about what is going on with his child—I won't be the only one to go. I think that it is both of our responsibilities. These are things you have to talk about between couples...with talking everything will work out.

Generally, mothers would take their children to ECCE in the morning, return home, cook dinner and clean the house, then get ready and leave for work in the middle of the afternoon; while fathers worked in the morning, and on the way home would pick their children up at ECCE, bring them home and care for them into the evening. Paola explained this,

Here it is more shared...but it is hard too. It's more equal on both sides because here is I am working, he has to work and if I work, he has to pick up the kids, or drop them off. And [in Mexico] it is the same but he has to work [outside the home] more...and me less, so that I can be home with the kids.

However some fathers had two jobs, and among these families after the father returned home and fed the children dinner, they would bring the children to a babysitter until the mother returned home, so they could go to their evening jobs.

Overall, mothers indicated that the fathers of their children were far more involved than they would be in their COOs—and this was even the case for some parents

who were separated. Esmeralda's husband would take their daughter to and from her ECCE program. In the morning Esmeralda would ride with them, and in the afternoon he would pick up their daughter and bring her to Esmeralda's apartment because Esmeralda was still resting after working nights.

Mothers' greatest adjustments to living in the U.S. were when they began parenting in the U.S., and even more so, when they had children who began to interact with the outside world through their use of ECCE. For some this was when they first arrived while for others it was years after they first immigrated. Mothers' parenting experiences in the U.S. were shaped by not only their COO experiences but also their experiences in the U.S., as well as the context of U.S. society. Mothers experiences with their own families as well as their current relations with their parents, siblings, and other family members, as well as institutional supports in the U.S. including ECCE, parenting programs, language schools, as well as various types of popular press media, all shaped mothers' goals for their children. However the context of U.S. society particularly in terms of the need for both parents to be employed, the shift from family to institutional support, as well as access to programs to support their children's education and language development, really shaped mothers' experiences parenting in the U.S.

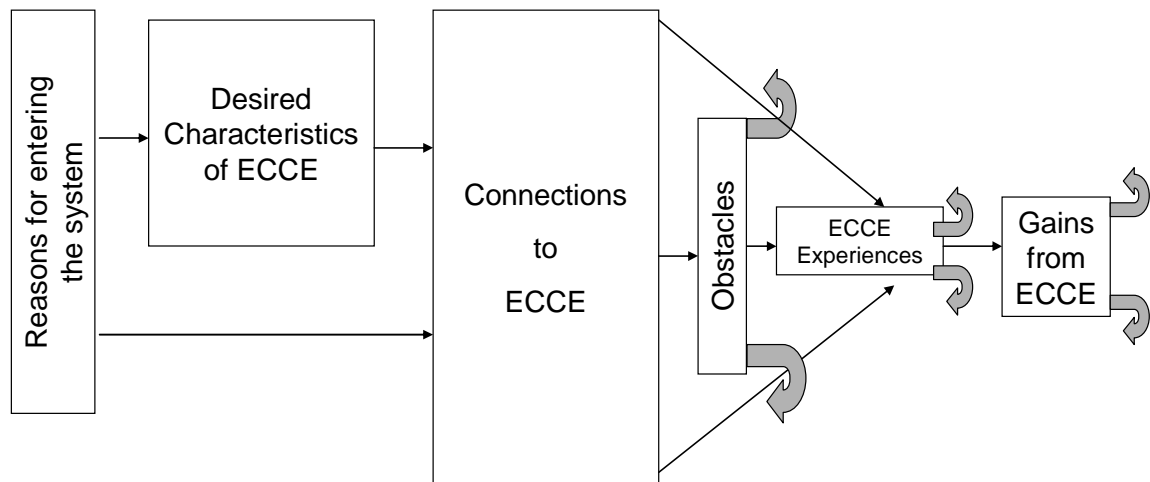
Rather than simply the mixing of two culture, these mothers' parenting in the U.S. seemed to reflect a unique social framework for parenting, unseen among native-born parents. As they taught their children values and skills from the U.S. and their COOs, mothers tended to use parenting practices that they learned about and developed in the U.S. This process was influenced by the development of mothers' ideas and practices

related to rearing their children in the U.S. The process reflected how mothers navigated large systems that focus on young children and their families, such as the ECCE system.

Chapter 6: Navigation of the ECCE System

In this chapter, the third research question regarding how low-income immigrant mothers navigate the U.S. ECCE system is addressed. All of the parents in this study had experiences interacting with the early childhood care and education system (ECCE). However parents' experiences learning about and navigating this system varied in terms of when and why they engaged with ECCE, as well as how they gained knowledge regarding this system, obstacles they faced trying to navigate the ECCE systems, and finally their experiences in their children's ECCE program (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Pathway for Navigating the ECCE System



At the time of this study, all of the families were enrolled in an early childhood care and education program. For some families this was their children's first experience

with an ECCE program, while for others their children had been in some form of ECCE since they were infants. For example, Camila, a 26 year old Mexican mother of two, needed to return to work when her child was five months old so she hired a woman in the same apartment building to care for her child. A year later she moved her child to a center-based program in which the teachers spoke Spanish, and a year and a half later Camila enrolled her daughter in Time of Wonder, which is where she was at the time of the interview. In contrast, Teresa, a 34 year old Argentine mother of two, cared for both of her daughters at home until they were three years old, and then decided to enroll them in the local Head Start.

In this section the processes in which parents engaged to navigate the ECCE system as they selected and utilized ECCE for their children are described. As mothers navigated the ECCE system they moved back and forth between various aspects of this pathway, which includes parents' reasons for selecting care, the characteristics they looked for in ECCE providers, how parents connected with providers, obstacles they faced and gains in social capital they experienced from having their children participate in ECCE.

Case example 1: Elsa's story. The story of Elsa a mother of two from Mexico illustrates just one family's experiences as they navigated the ECCE system after immigrating to the U.S. Elsa arrived in the U.S. seven years before she was interviewed for this study. Elsa initially lived in Florida for three years as this is where her husband, who was her boyfriend at the time, first migrated because his family was located there. However, a few years later she moved to Washington, DC because her brother lived there. When Elsa arrived in DC her daughter, Eva was five months old and she knew

she needed to work to help support her family financially. After getting settled in DC and finding employment, which was her main reason for entering the ECCE system, Elsa began to look for an ECCE program for Eva.

When she was looking for a provider, Elsa was looking for a place where her daughter would be safe and secure, as well as a place that was geographically convenient to her home. Also, she wanted a program where the teachers were not only caring but also very experienced. Elsa utilized geographic connections to initially look for an ECCE provider, as she walked around her neighborhood to determine an ECCE program to which she could apply. She found two programs that encompassed all that she was looking for in an ECCE for Eva. However, Elsa encountered an obstacle--both of the programs were full.

Elsa then went back to another connection to the ECCE system that she had, a social connection, and talked with a Latina who cleaned her apartment building each day. She asked this woman, whom she trusted because they were of a similar linguistic and cultural background and because she saw this woman every day cleaning her building, if she knew of anyone who could babysit Eva. She did, and put Elsa in touch with another Latina who Elsa ultimately hired to take care of Eva for the next two years. Because of this care arrangement Elsa was able to go to work and support her family financially.

When Eva was three, Elsa heard that one of the centers, La Casita del Saber to which she had originally applied when Eva was 10 months old, was accepting applications because of additional funding through a Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) initiative. She applied, Eva was accepted, and enrolled when she was three years old. Elsa's experiences with La Casita del Saber were very positive, and she especially liked

that it was bilingual and that the teachers were very communicative and open regarding Eva's progress.

Elsa seemed to gain quite a bit of social capital from having her daughter enrolled in La Casita del Saber. One form of social capital that was particularly salient for Elsa was the information that she gathered from the program in relation to parenting. Specifically, Elsa wanted to teach her daughter her numbers and letters, and was not sure how to go about this, because the things she had already tried were not very successful as her daughter would get bored. The teachers at La Casita del Saber suggested that she play games with her daughter to make it fun, and specifically, they suggested using playing cards to help her practice her numbers. To Elsa this was an ingenious idea, and indeed Elsa successfully worked with Eva to learn her numbers and letters. The pathway that Elsa followed as she navigated the ECCE system and secured care for her daughter was not completely linear, particularly as she came up against obstacles in terms of securing care, and as more care options matching her desired characteristics became available, Elsa moved back and forth through the pathway.

Case example 2: Sharon and Luke's story. Sharon and Luke's process of navigating the ECCE system was slightly different than Elsa's. Luke and Sharon came from Ghana to the U.S. ten and six years, respectively, before they were interviewed. They came so Luke could pursue his degree in fashion design at Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT) in New York City. Although they were married in Ghana, Sharon did not come to the U.S. with Luke because of documentation issues—they were geographically separated for four years. When Sharon arrived, they lived in New York for two more years, until they decided the pace of life there was too fast for them.

Shortly after their daughter Kessie was born, they moved to Virginia because Luke's brother lived there. Sharon stayed home and took care of Kessie until she was almost three, and had not really thought about ECCE until Kessie was two and the pediatrician mentioned that they should be considering something like Head Start, which Sharon and Luke did not know much about at the time. Consequently, when they called to enroll Kessie in Head Start Sharon and Luke had not necessarily thought about what they really wanted for their daughter in terms of ECCE, but just knew that Head Start is where she should go based on the pediatrician's recommendations. Sharon and Luke had no challenges enrolling Kessie in Head Start—they called River Banks and were told the enrollment date, and registered her on that specific date, and she started at Head Start without any problems.

Once Kessie began at River Banks Sharon and Luke noticed her ability to speak English improved dramatically, as well as her taste for nutritional food. In addition Sharon's friendship with two other mothers that had previously been acquaintances blossomed while she was there. These mothers had children in River Banks for a year earlier than Kessie so they would give Sharon information regarding what to expect, particularly in terms of home visits. Also, if they needed someone to drive Kessie to River Banks, these friends were available to help with this.

Overall, Sharon and Luke's navigation of the ECCE system was slightly different than Elsa's in that they did not necessarily look for ECCE for their daughter, but rather someone else told them to consider Head Start. Also, they did not use any outside care until Kessie was three, and when they decided to put her in Head Start they did not have any issues enrolling her. Parents moved through this system in a variety of different

ways, which will be explored in the following sections. Each aspect of this pathway will be described in greater detail to understand the range of experiences immigrant parents had as they moved through the ECCE system (See Figure 4).

Reasons for Entering the ECCE System

As varied as Camila, Teresa, and Elsa's experiences were with ECCE in terms of when their children entered care, so were their reasons for looking for early childhood care and education. Among the families who participated in this study there were a variety of reasons that parents began looking for ECCE including both parent-focused and child-focused reasons. Specifically, parent-focused reasons for looking for ECCE included parental employment, parents' return to school, and parents' mental health; while child-focused reasons were related to preparing children for Kindergarten, including cognitive, language, and socioemotional development.

Parent-focused reasons. Parental employment was the main reason parents entered their children into an ECCE arrangement prior to being three or four years old. For many mothers this initial arrangement was informal care with a neighbor or a friend because no center-based care was available. As Elsa indicated, "when I came here, I knew I would have to work...and when I came [to look for ECCE] I think [Eva] was nine or ten months...so I applied since there aren't many centers nearby and all. Since I started working five months after I came [from Florida] I needed a babysitter because she didn't start at any day care." Some mothers, like Valeria a mother of two from Mexico, rearranged their work hours so that they did not need to be away from their children for a full 40 hour work week. "I changed the job of eight hours to five hours in the afternoon

to be with the kids during the day...during the day I took care of them, since I worked in the afternoon and in the afternoon their aunt took care of them.”

For other participants, furthering their own education led them to look for ECCE. Some mothers enrolled in English classes, while others began taking classes to earn certificates and college degrees. Daniela, a 31 year old mother of two from El Salvador who experienced postpartum depression after the birth of her first child, was very much committed to enrolling in English classes following the birth of her second child to ensure moving forward with her life and trying to avoid another bout of depression. However finding care for her daughters was far more challenging than she anticipated and ultimately she was on the waiting list at an ECCE program for three years before her older daughter was admitted.

But after I had Laura I said to myself I have to do something because I saw that I needed to learn English and develop...it was then a lot harder because I had two daughters...When space was available for Daniela in La Casita del Saber then I could enroll myself in the other program. While I studied they took care of Laura.

The English program Daniela enrolled in provided her not only with English classes but also ECCE in the same building, for her younger daughter, Laura.

Sofia, a mother of two from El Salvador, described her experience with an Even Start program, when she “needed help with the kids....because she was always stressed at home,” as something that was good for her and made her happy because she and her children could be learning in the same building. Use of this type of program at some point during their children’s early childhood years often funded by Even Start a federal program focused on family literacy, was common among participants. Isabel, a mother of two from Mexico, after battling cancer with her oldest daughter, had a desire to return

to school, which is what prompted her to look for care. “I wanted to go to school, and well, wanted them to learn more too. They have taught them [referring to her children] a lot and I also want to go to school.”

For Viviana, when her daughter was born, she was working towards a certificate in child development. A friend told her about Time of Wonder and assisted her in completing the necessary paperwork for her daughter to enroll, “when she helped me to put the application and all the stuff, so she was born in July and in September they called me, so she entered when she was three months.” Maisa was studying business technology and computers and was in class five days a week from for seven hours each day, and so she found a local child care program into which she enrolled her son, so she could continue with her studies. Using child care to further one’s education, was most common among parents enrolled in English classes, while their children were in ECCE. However some parents they sought care so they could work towards a college certificate or degree.

Finally, a few parents mentioned looking for ECCE for their children for their own mental health reasons either related to depression or simply feeling overwhelmed and in need of support for their responsibilities as stay-at-home parents. Daniela discussed being depressed after the birth of her first child and preferring to be in the house, so with her second daughter, Laura, she made sure she found child care and got out of the house. Kassa, an Ethiopian mother of four, described asking for information about ECCE because she, “needed help, I had three children, and nobody gave me information, but I asked and said I need help.”

Child-focused reasons. Many parents chose to enroll their children in their current ECCE program to prepare them for Kindergarten. These preparations for starting formal schooling included learning English, promoting socioemotional development, as well as working on more academic skills like writing their names. Parents were aware of the importance of learning English prior to entering Kindergarten for both academic and social reasons. Juliana, a Guatemalan mother of one boy was told by friends that if she did not put her son in ECCE,

...before going to normal school that it was going to make it more difficult for him to learn the language [English]. So they told me to put him in daycare and they are going to teach him how to talk, and they will teach him the language of this country.

Other parents were concerned with their children's ability to socialize with other children, as Maria discussed concern about her son's inability to speak any English and his limited ability to communicate in Spanish, and how this impacted his ability to socialize with other children. Consequently, she decided to enroll her son in Head Start. Parents were very deliberate about the type of ECCE their children used. They wanted to ensure that in these programs their children would be exposed to English. If this meant finding a new ECCE program, as some Latina mothers did whose children were in care with providers who spoke only Spanish. Other parents were very intentional and even formed rules about when their children would speak English and when they would speak their parents' language. Marisa and her partner Pedro described this.

Because well it's better to go to the school and try to get some teachers, to learn the [English] because we speak Spanish only in the house, so we don't worry about Spanish, we worry about English that she can talk English in the school. But we prefer Spanish [at home], that way she doesn't forget the language. She speaks English at school whatever she wants, but when she comes here, only Spanish, in our house.

Aside from learning English prior to Kindergarten many parents were concerned about their children's socioemotional development, and specifically their children's abilities to interact with other children. Aster compared her son's experience in the care of his grandmother with his experiences at Head Start in terms of interacting with other children. "If he stayed home with his grandma he is not learning anything, but he is safe—he's safe but he's not learning anything like with other kids, like sharing, communicating with others. He's learned so many things—he's changed." Aster relied on her mother as much as possible for child care because her oldest son experienced both abuse and neglect by two separate child care providers that Aster hired when he was a baby. Not until she found River Banks for her second child did Aster consider her children to be safe in outside child care. Enrolling in River Banks provided them with the opportunity to interact with other children in a high-quality care environment.

There were mothers who enrolled their children in ECCE because they wanted them children to be academically prepared for Kindergarten. Specifically, they wanted their children to be in ECCE programs that had curricula and focused on skills that would be needed in Kindergarten. Often parents described these types of ECCE as 'school'. Maisa explained the difference between Head Start and the child care program her son Jonah was using previously,

It was just like day care [describing the child care program that she left to enroll her son in Head Start]. I think it was different. It wasn't like school...at school he learns a lot, everything. At daycare he just slept, take a nap, lunch, and breakfast and snack and something like that—he didn't really learn anything...I prefer school.

Most parents did not solely discuss one reason for enrolling their children in an ECCE program but rather a host of motivations, as Teresa described,

I really wanted that my daughters could go to Head Start because I knew that they will learn and that it would be good for English too. Especially because my daughter, Elena and Kathy too is not much like Elena, she was so shy she didn't want to talk [to anyone]...So that was my first goal with Head Start, to help her with her shyness because she is always so shy. In the beginning it was hard because she was always crying when I left her...I just did it for her good.

Mothers sought care for their children for parent-focused and child-focused reasons. Parent-focused reasons included needing care because of employment, returning to school, as well as mental health reasons. Child-focused reasons were related to Kindergarten preparation in terms of socioemotional and linguistic development. Among the many reasons discussed, using ECCE to support mothers' mental health and children's language development seems unique to immigrant families.

Desired Characteristics of ECCE

Parents were intentional and planful as they sought ECCE providers for their children, and referred to a host of characteristics they believed were most important in terms of education and care for their children. They discussed the importance of program/ provider logistics, aspects of the facility, as well as qualities they desired in ECCE programs and staff. Cost, location, and hours of operation were among parents' most common logistical considerations as they sought ECCE for their children. Despite seeking ECCE of high quality with strong curricula parents were constrained by their financial situations and forced to consider whether they could afford various care and education options for their children. Many parents considered cost first, and consequently the quality of ECCE programs was secondarily evaluated by parents. In addition, while considering the cost of ECCE, some parents were not aware of financial support they could receive for their children to attend Head Start or other ECCE

programs through the use of vouchers. Juliana did not discover that financial support for ECCE was available until she took her son out of an ECCE program after only one month, in part because the cost was too high.

...the cost was too much, \$150/week. So I said I can't afford that, because they didn't tell me that I could get a voucher, nothing...So I said [to a friend] how did you do it because those day cares over here cost so much money?...And she said, no La Casita del Saber is a place where you can take your kids and there they do a lottery so your child can qualify for a voucher.

Ultimately, Juliana was able to enroll her child in La Casita del Saber but only after having financially and emotionally challenging experiences at another ECCE program. Once parents learned about Head Start and other government funding for ECCE, they were even more surprised by the cost of various ECCE programs because to them these programs were no different than Head Start, as Sana, a Somalian mother of four described.

I was looking [at other programs] but a week it was \$250, sometimes a little bit expensive and it's nothing different [than the Head Start]. The private and the Head Start...I went before to other schools and nothing different.

In addition to cost, parents searched for care that was geographically close to their home or possibly even their employment, for convenience in terms of transportation and arriving at their place of employment on time each day. However, finding care that was geographically convenient was not always possible. Viviana would cross two state borders every morning and evening as she brought her infant son from the District of Columbia to Maryland to be cared for by her mother in law, and then would back track to work in Virginia. Her oldest daughter was enrolled in Time of Wonder at the time, but for the first nine months of her son's life there was no space for him at the same program.

Adding to her stressful commute, Viviana was responsible for picking her daughter up from Time of Wonder at the end of the day (her husband dropped their daughter off in the morning on the way to work), and on some days with the traffic in the metro area this was challenging for her to do. This commute was grueling, but it was Viviana's most affordable option at the time, and so despite not being convenient in terms of location she was forced to continue with this until she was able to enroll her son in Time of Wonder. She never considered using a voucher to look for closer, affordable care because she was nervous utilizing this would risk her husband's chances of obtaining U.S. citizenship.

It was my mother-in-law at that time. It was kind of hard because I was working in Virginia. I was supposed to wake around 5:00am, bring him to my mother-in-law's around here [in Maryland], and then go back to Virginia. It was Arlington, the place I was working. Every morning, like two hours, we wake up at 5:00am, drop him over here, go back to Arlington...I was spending four hours a day in the car...one day it was raining, it was like a huge traffic, I get off at three, I didn't have time to go to the bathroom because I need to pick her up by 6:00pm, and you never know what to expect [in terms of traffic], and I spent the whole three hours in traffic. I got to Time of Wonder around 6:05pm...the first time you pick her up late, you get a warning, the second time they charge you a dollar a minute, and the third time they suspend them for three days. So imagine you are in traffic, you don't get on time, what's going to happen to your child...

Finally, parents also selected programs and providers for their children based on the hours that they needed their children to be cared for while they were at work. For some a regular Monday through Friday, 8:00AM to 6:00PM center-based care option was acceptable. However for others who worked at night in jobs that did not require expert language skills, at local restaurants or overnight, cleaning office buildings utilized neighbors during these times for babysitting. In addition, many of these parents utilized Head Start during the day. Consequently, these children were interacting with multiple care providers in various care arrangements throughout their days. For example, Esmeralda, a Mexican mother cleaned office buildings from 10:00PM to 7:00AM, so she

hired a neighbor who lived upstairs from her to care for her daughter overnight as she went to work. However, Esmeralda was also looking for a place that her daughter could learn during the day, which was how she found Time of Wonder. Esmeralda's daughter would spend her mornings and early afternoons at Time of Wonder, late afternoons and evenings with her mother, and then would sleep over night in a neighbor's apartment.

Esmeralda described their evening routine.

Around 7:00PM we shower and she is there [at home] for about an hour or two because she likes to play. Then five minutes before 9:30PM I drop her off at the babysitter. She eats dinner around 8:00PM or 8:30PM after she gets out of the shower...I eat sometimes but I usually eat at midnight at work. I come from work around 7:30AM or 7:45AM. I pick her up and I bring her here to get her ready for school.

In addition to convenient hours of operation, parents considered aspects of the facility including size, cleanliness and security as important. Parents discussed positive initial impressions of programs if they were located in new and clean, larger buildings with spacious grounds, even prior to observing the teachers and staff, and understanding the curricula. They considered being spacious important so children could run around and play freely. Parents were also concerned that the facilities were secure, which was particularly common among the parents who lived in Washington, DC. One of the DC programs was located in a neighborhood that was part of the District's revitalization efforts in the late 1990's. It was generally a safe neighborhood but it was not uncommon for security guards and police officers to be seen at the entrances of local businesses. There was a security guard always posted at the entrance to La Casita del Saber, which was within a larger charter school that had metal detectors at its main entrance. Parents may have mentioned the security being important at Time of Wonder not necessarily

because the neighborhood where it was situated seemed dangerous but simply because the security system that was installed in the program was very impressive. There were cameras throughout the facility, including inside the classrooms, so parents could log into a specific password protected website on any computer, throughout the day and monitor their children. In contrast, very few, if any of the parents who lived in Virginia mentioned this as important, which may be because the security measures at River Banks were fairly standard in terms of parents coming in one specific door and signing in and out each time they picked up and dropped off their children—there were no cameras or security guards on the school grounds. In addition, River Banks was located within a fairly safe residential area. Consequently, security most likely was not of great concern to these parents.

Finally, in terms of program and staff, parents really wanted their children to be with providers who were recommended by a trusted family member or friend. It was not uncommon for parents to consider only one or two ECCE options—these options being the programs that friends and family members recommended--when they contemplated where to enroll their children in ECCE. In addition to being recommended by a trusted individual, parents also talked about wanting their children to be with providers who were not only caring, but who were knowledgeable, experienced, and communicative. Desta, an Ethiopian mother of two described the importance of her children having “good teachers” and how she knew her children had good teachers.

Very, very good teachers...Most of the time I came here for parent meetings and usually I would sit with them too (after the meeting)...I work from 3pm to 11pm so I have time in the morning. I spend time in the morning in both classes (for her two children). So I just look at how they are doing and the way they teach the children. That's the way I say, 'Yes, they are good teachers,' very experienced, a lot of experience. They listen to what the kids need and they focus on one child at

a time...even if the child isn't talking, they ask what they want and follow his activity, and if he is not active (like usual) they will call you. They pay more attention to the kids.

Many of the aforementioned desired characteristics are similar to what many non-immigrant parents of similar socioeconomic status may look for when considering and selecting an ECCE program. However, these parents emphasized the importance of having access to a bilingual program or provider, and some focused quite specifically on the diversity of the program, which seemed particularly unique to immigrant parents. Many of the Latino parents sought bilingual ECCE programs and providers for two reasons. First, for practical reasons, a bilingual program guaranteed parents the ability to communicate with their children's teachers in their native tongue, and to be able to understand any work the children would bring home from school. Parents were also committed to their children learning both languages, which is why Latina parents did not simply use a Spanish-speaking provider, but rather sought out programs where their children could learn English and Spanish. Generally, parents wanted their children to know the language of their country of origin so that children could communicate with their relatives there as Amira, a mother from Eritrea described,

Because especially my auntie was here. She just left for home Friday. When she came she couldn't talk to them, they couldn't answer to her. They tell her so many things and then I have to translate. I think oh my god that is important to know my language. If that were to happen go back home, no one understands English. They should study their language. And then I told them that you have to talk Tigrinya, you have to talk Tigrinya.

However other mothers like Esmeralda, a Mexican mother who was emotionally estranged from her family in Mexico, described being bilingual as important for other reasons like helping others in the community.

I think it's good because wherever you go there are people who can't speak the language so you can go and help them and translate. Sometimes at the clinic there is a receptionist that doesn't know how to speak Spanish and then someone else has to come and translate. That is why I want her to learn two languages because it will help for anything.

Finally, parents discussed the importance of finding a program that was diverse, and specifically programs that enrolled children who were not of the same linguistic, cultural, or racial background as their children. This seemed to be a desire related to diversity that was unique to immigrant families, because these families tended to see the ECCE program as a way of integrating or acculturating their children. Specifically, these immigrant parents wanted to be sure that their children were able to socialize with children from all different races and ethnicities, especially because outside of ECCE many of these children only spent time with other children and adults from similar backgrounds. Teresa described her hopes for her daughters meeting children from other racial backgrounds, "especially that she can make friends and to talk with different ones you know, not just the Spanish ones, but black kids too...now she sees they are not different. They are friends too." While Halima, discussed that she wanted her son to know, "...how to communicate with other kids because he always saw Arabic families and I want him to learn [about] other cultures and religions."

When selecting care parents considered a multitude of characteristics and weighed each carefully. However, overall, parents were forced to consider cost and location first before being able to think about the actual program in terms of the facility and staff. For these families bilingualism and diversity seemed to be important in ways that are likely different from non-immigrant families of similar socio economic status.

Using Social Capital Connections to Navigate the ECCE System

All of the parents in this study utilized social capital to learn about the ECCE system and determine the best type of program for their children. Usually looking for ECCE was initiated by the parents but many times parents began to look for ECCE based on the recommendation of someone else. Parents who began utilizing care for parent-focused reasons generally initiated looking for care; however parents who began using ECCE when their children were older and for more child-focused reasons often did so based on advice from either family, friends, medical providers, or social workers. Juliana learned about the importance of ECCE from a friend who had two girls with whom her son would play.

“...she told me, ‘look my girls are going to La Casita del Saber and they are learning a lot.’ And I looked at them when we took her kids to the park and her children had already started talking with other kids from here that were of a different race. And I would look at my son and how he was intimidated and he would go away because he wouldn’t understand anything and I knew what she was saying was right. She was the only one who told me it was good for them...So she just told me I could look for a day care.”

Regardless of whether finding ECCE was self-initiated or initiated based on the recommendations of someone else, parents tended to utilize three types of connections leading to the development of social capital that ultimately resulted in ECCE arrangements for their children. The ties that led to the necessary social capital for navigating the ECCE system were categorized as social, organizational, or geographic connections.

Social connections. Social connections included friends, family members, employers, and neighbors. The majority of these connections tended to be friends and relationships that existed prior to mother looking for ECCE. Consequently, these social

connections were trusted and with individuals who most likely had their own young children who were enrolled in ECCE. Parents felt comfortable turning to these individuals for information or help.

The most common way that parents discovered various ECCE options was through close friends and family members. For example, Camila learned about Time of Wonder from a friend she knew since she was in Mexico and who lived in the same apartment building, “she recommended I check Time of Wonder because she had both of her daughters who were four and five there, and said it was a lot better [than the small Spanish-speaking child care she was using].” Sometimes family and friends assisted parents in not only finding an ECCE program, but also in terms of procuring and completing the necessary paperwork to register. Valeria, a mother of two from Mexico said, “...because my friend has her kids there [Time of Wonder] and she took me to fill out an application.” Also, parents’ friends and family members used their own organizational connections to assist parents in connecting with and registering for ECCE. For example, Guadalupe utilized information from her sister-in-law’s social worker. Specifically, the social worker helped her sister-in-law complete paperwork for Time of Wonder, and then Guadalupe’s sister-in-law brought her an application as well.

In addition to friends and family members, ironically, parents who worked as nannies taking care of other parents’ children gained valuable information regarding ECCE from their employers. Mercedes, a live-in nanny for Deborah, a single mother who was a professor at a local university, learned about Time of Wonder from Deborah, her employer. Mercedes not only learned about the ECCE program from Deborah, but she also helped Mercedes complete the necessary paperwork to enroll in Time of

Wonder. Another mother, Yenee, was a nanny for a family with children who were close in age to her own son, Lebna, when she began to realize that Lebna's language development was somewhat delayed. The family that employed Yenee encouraged and assisted her in contacting Early Intervention (EI). Ultimately through EI an individual education plan was developed for Lebna, and it was this initial connection with EI services that ultimately connected Yenee and Lebna with Head Start.

I was a nanny for this nice family and she was trying to search for things for me when he turned two. It's like [Lebna] didn't speak, you know he was very delayed...so she found that [EI] for me, and they came here and approved him for services. Yeah so they did that and finally they told me to apply for Early Head Start.

For some parents social connections were created solely for the purpose of procuring ECCE. This was more common among Latina participants who lived in ethnic enclaves with informal networks of care and employment. These ties were not as close as those connections that had longevity and were based on friendship or family relationships. However these relationships were generally with individuals from similar linguistic, cultural, and racial backgrounds, which automatically implied a certain level of trust. When parents developed these ties, often they were somewhat desperate for an ECCE arrangement because of impending employment. Thus, these social connections despite being new and somewhat unknown were extremely important for these families' abilities to be employed. For example, when Elsa arrived in a new city, and was ready to start a new job but was unable to find a placement in any of the local ECCE programs she turned to the woman who cleaned her apartment building. "Well, I asked the lady that cleaned where we lived if she knew of anyone that took care of kids and she gave me the

number. I called and asked if she could take care of her.” Juliana befriended a woman in the park who knew of a child care provider.

We met and we talked about how she knew a woman that took care of children, her children, that she would take them to school and bring them back...I took the number and when they called me from my job I called her. I told her about my son, how he was and all. She said she could take care of him and ‘I’m going to charge you what I always charge.’ So I said it was not important what you charge me but that my son is with a good person.

Mothers’ social connections were the most frequent means that mothers used to find ECCE for their children. Specifically they included friends, relatives, neighbors, and even employers. Mothers’ social connections were old and trusted as well as new connections that were made for the sake of finding ECCE for their children. Mothers used these connections to not only learn about various ECCE options, but also to complete the necessary paperwork to apply to different programs. Inhering trust and convenience social connections were essential to mothers’ abilities to navigate the ECCE system successfully.

Organizational connections. In addition to relying on social relationships with friends, family members, employers and acquaintances, parents also utilized ties with various organizations including social service programs, pediatricians, ECCE programs, the public library, as well as other activities in which their children were enrolled, to learn about ECCE options for their children. Sometimes this information was gleaned from interactions with individuals while in some cases parents learned about Head Start and other ECCE programs from fliers that were posted in local, public agencies and organizations.

In terms of individuals, most often, parents interacted with social workers. For example, Daniela met a social worker through Even Start who eventually encouraged her to apply to La Casita del Saber. In addition, Marisol, contacted the City of Spring Valley when her son was three to be assigned to a social worker who would help her find an ECCE program. Perla met a social worker at her daughter's music class who ultimately helped her find an ECCE program. Another mother, Kassa, who has four children and is from Ethiopia first met a social worker while giving birth to her fourth child. This social worker gave her the necessary information to enroll her older children in Head Start. In addition to social workers, pediatricians were important individuals in terms of sharing information regarding ECCE. Sharon, a mother of two from Ghana described the information her pediatrician gave her about ECCE. "The pediatrician, yea, she told us about [Head Start]. When I said she was two, yea. She gave us the form and told us to enroll her before she turns three." Finally, a couple mothers saw fliers for Head Start and other ECCE programs posted at both the WIC office, as well as free health clinics.

The use of organizational connections to find ECCE varied among mothers. Sometimes mothers, like Maisa began using these connections as soon as they arrived in the U.S. Shortly after she came to the U.S. Maisa learned about social services from her sponsor who helped her get settled in the U.S. as part of coming to the U.S. as a refugee. Each time she needed help understanding something related to public programs, including ECCE, she turned to her social worker for information. However other mothers tended to use organizations for ECCE information less frequently. Specifically, except for a reduced fee for ECCE at La Casita del Saber, Marisa and her partner Pedro generally did not utilize any organizational assistance for information or financial

support. In addition to ECCE they knew about various government assistance programs but never took advantage of them, and proudly stated, “[we] work too hard...never had unemployment...never had Food Stamps, anything, health support.”

Geographic connections. Finally some parents navigated the ECCE system through ties based on where they lived. Mothers talked about being aware of certain schools because of the programs’ close proximities to their homes. Some parents noticed new programs as they walked to work or to the grocery store, as Pedro, Marisa’s partner mentioned. “When I was going to work I passed by the 18th street one and then they opened La Casita del Saber that is by Brown Street, that is how we found out about it, because we lived like two blocks from there.” Other parents mentioned looking around their neighborhood for an ECCE program, as Camila described. “I walked around my neighborhood and found Sunny Days day care. However they were completely full at the time.” Other parents mentioned receiving fliers for ECCE programs from individuals on the streets near their homes, as Sofia described, “Well, all the people that work for Time of Wonder they are always there on the streets or whatever place you can find them talking to people and handing out fliers.”

Generally parents utilized multiple connections to develop social capital related to finding ECCE programs for their children. Also, parents who utilized more than one care arrangement often did not use the same strategies to find and secure each of these arrangements. Over time the connections mothers’ used to find ECCE changed as their social networks shifted and as their knowledge of organizational resources, and their neighborhood expanded

Obstacles to Securing ECCE

Despite knowing what they wanted for their children in terms of ECCE and even finding the ECCE program or provider they wanted to utilize, parents faced multiple obstacles to securing the care they truly desired. The two most common obstacles immigrant parents faced as they navigated the ECCE system were availability and affordability, which is similar to what many low-income, native-born parents face. In other words some programs were simply too expensive, while others that were affordable had long wait lists. In addition to these two obstacles parents mentioned documentation and eligibility for government subsidized programs, as challenges.

Over half of the families in this study were put on a wait list at some point during their children's early childhood years. For some this wait period was only a few weeks but for other families they were on waitlists for over three years. These long waitlists not only impacted children in terms of the ECCE into which they were placed while they waited for availability at the desired program, but also parents' schedules, particularly related to work and school. Daniela was unable to attend English classes because La Casita del Saber did not have space for her older daughter. Her younger daughter was able to come to English classes with her, but her older daughter could not based on program rules, so she needed to find her child care before enrolling.

So after I had Laura I told myself I wanted to take English classes. It was then a lot harder because I had two daughters. There was not any room for two girls of different ages. I waited until one day they called me from La Casita del Saber because I wanted to enroll Daniela into La Casita del Saber...three years later they called me and told me they had room for her...When the space was available for Daniela in La Casita del Saber then I could enroll myself in the other program [English classes]. While I studied they took care of Laura.

During the time that Daniela was waiting for her daughter to be admitted to La Casita del Saber, she took care of them. Other parents reduced the hours that they were working to stay home with their children while they waited for an ECCE opening to be available. Aster caught a child care provider shaking her son, and she removed him immediately. She then approached someone recommended by social services. However, even with a new ECCE arrangement challenges continued, ultimately forcing Aster to discontinue working.

When I dropped him off for home care, I see her (the provider), she is leaving him at home with her boyfriend...yeah, and she got sick, she had cancer or something. You know she was in the hospital. It was too many things, you know? I cannot afford to take him somewhere else. I was only working for \$9 per hour, so I said, 'forget it,' and I stop working. Child care—yeah, it's too hard for me.

For other mothers, particularly those who had jobs that they needed to be at everyday, being placed on a waiting list meant finding other ECCE arrangements during the interim. Sometimes these care arrangements were not of as high quality as the centers to which these parents originally applied; however in desperation to work and financially support their families, they were left with very few options. Desta was on a waitlist for Time of Wonder for two years, and during that time her daughter was enrolled in center-based care that as she described as not as high quality because, "...all the children stayed in the same room...all the ages together...I like better this one [Time of Wonder].” Finally, for some mothers lengthy waitlists sometimes resulted in extra commuting and having children at two different ECCE programs. Mothers like Perla who had two children within two years of each other were sometimes unable to find two openings at the same ECCE program. Consequently this led to shuttling between two programs for a few months until there was space available at one of the programs for both children. Not

only was this stressful for parents in terms of timing picking up and dropping off the children at each of the centers, but it was also difficult for the children as they moved from program to program. Perla described her experiences trying to get both children in the same center,

....then we moved here (to DC from Maryland) and [Rosa] went to Time of Wonder, and Mark was in La Casita de Saber. Rosa was at Time of Wonder for a year, and then later Mark went [when there was an opening]. They were both there for three weeks but Mark would cry, wouldn't sleep, and wouldn't eat...he never adapted....So, I asked Ana (the director of La Casita del Saber) if it was possible for Mark to come back. She said sure. So I came back, and I asked if it was possible for Rosa to stay here too, and she said yes.

Paperwork, and specifically providing documentation regarding residence, was another obstacle parents faced in securing ECCE for their children. A need to provide documentation only occurred as parents began to look for center-based care, as in-home providers never asked for any of this information. Some parents had either recently moved from another state and did not yet have any documents to prove their residence, while others lived with friends or family members and consequently did not have the appropriate paperwork to prove residence. Inability to prove residence was a particular issue for immigrants who were undocumented but who had children who were born in the United States and were U.S. citizens. Some ECCE programs asked for more documentation and paperwork than others, which deterred parents from utilizing these programs. Marisa and her partner, Pedro, shared their frustration with the paperwork required by ECCE programs.

The one thing in La Casita del Saber I am not happy with, I don't agree with them, or maybe the system, the education system I don't like because when we try to get some space for any child, they give us too much obstacles, too much...too many challenges, too many obstacles to get into the program. First of all, they ask for too many papers, you have to prove everything so I told them, 'How am I

going to prove that I live in DC?’ Sometimes we don’t pay bills because we rent houses and the owner, we don’t pay bills, only rent, so we don’t have proofs...the landlords don’t give us any papers to sign and they pay water and electricity so we don’t have any bills in our name...it is special for us Hispanic immigrants because a lot of people don’t have papers, so that’s why they can’t rent an apartment because you have to show your social security number and proof you are legal. That’s why we try to find rooms in houses, and the landlord don’t ask for anything...not the school, the system, they ask too much.

Finally, some parents ran into challenges securing care because they did not qualify for federal programs, including Head Start and the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) that would assist with child care costs. In particular, parents like Marisol earned slightly too much money each week to qualify for Head Start yet she could not afford private ECCE of similar high quality. Ultimately she reduced her hours at her job because of personal health issues, qualified for Head Start and was able to enroll her son in the program. Other parents experienced challenges in relation to CCDF. A few parents became frustrated because to qualify for vouchers that were distributed through CCDF the parents needed to be employed. However, as parents described, in order to be employed they needed to secure ECCE first. Thus, these mothers were often put on the wait list at programs but were not considered for enrollment until they showed proof of employment. Many parents simply did not know about child care subsidies as Juliana described, “...since the beginning I didn’t know anything about the help that the government gave. When you start here you think that one doesn’t have the help of the government for being an immigrant. My son grew up without the help of the government. So we paid for everything with our salary...” Ultimately Juliana utilized CCDF but only because her friend told her about this assistance and a program at which she could use these vouchers.

ECCE Experiences

Participants' utilized different types of care during their children's early childhood years, but also coped with varying quality of care. They found that their satisfaction was quite different with these distinct providers. Parents' utilized a variety of care arrangements including informal family, friend, and neighbor care, home day care, center-based care, ECCE in their countries of origin, as well as Head Start and other government subsidized programs. Some of these arrangements lasted years while others lasted only days. For some parents they began utilizing care when their children were only a few months old, and thus utilized a few different ECCE arrangements by the time their children were going into Kindergarten. However other parents who were able to use parental care by trading care and staggering work responsibilities with their spouses' or by having one parent not work, did not enroll their children in ECCE until one or two years prior to Kindergarten. These parents tended to use the same ECCE during these preschool years.

The aforementioned pathways to utilizing ECCE in the preschool years shaped mothers' experiences in different ways. Mothers who used parental care until the child was of preschool age were able to save money, and delay having their children taken care of by someone other than the parents. However there were tradeoffs to this arrangement, including parents not seeing each other very much because of opposite work schedules or mothers who stayed home to care for their children not having the opportunity to be a part of the work force or continue with their education. On the contrary, parents who utilized ECCE throughout their children's early childhood years were able to be employed and continue their education to support and improve their families' financial

livelihoods. However, these parents found themselves with fewer hours to spend with their children each day.

Among these varied interactions with the ECCE system, parents commented on a variety of aspects of their experiences with these arrangements that were both positive and negative. In discussing their current ECCE program the majority of parents commented on how they were extremely satisfied with their children's learning, as well as their cognitive, socioemotional, and linguistic development. Marisa noted regarding her daughter Beatriz's progress, "Well, when we put her in [La Casita del Saber] we saw her advance in a couple of months—she came back and was speaking English....She also reads, she reads. She knows the numbers, the alphabet, geometric forms. She has learned a lot there, a lot....fine and gross motor skills, her body, how it is working and development."

Despite many parents having positive experiences in terms of what their children were learning there were some parents who were less pleased with their children's progress, as well as the programs', teachers', and staff's approaches to teaching and learning. Some parents were disappointed that their children did not yet exhibit the skills they deemed necessary for success in Kindergarten including writing their names well and beginning to read. Other parents were concerned for their children's language development because teachers' native languages were not English. Halima was uneasy about her daughter being taught by someone whose first language was something other than English, as she described below.

Before it was the American—they know how to talk to the kids and to teach good. But now I saw a different [teacher] she didn't know how to speak English good. Now anyone can work in Head Start—I did the program for substitute teachers, but didn't get accepted because my Green Card wasn't ready. But the English

level of [this teacher] is worse than mine and she now works there. How are kids going to learn if their teacher doesn't speak English? ...Even Acenath [daughter who is currently enrolled in ECCE] she didn't learn a lot like Mohammed—I don't know if he is smarter or if the teacher is different...Mohammed was with an American teacher.

Halima's concern reflects a worry that is likely unique to immigrant parents. Many chose to enroll their children in ECCE to improve their children's English language skills.

Native-born parents would likely be less concerned about teachers' language skills since their children are immersed in English at home, and thus not worried about whether their children will know enough English to be successful in Kindergarten.

Parents often disagreed about including children of different ages in the same classroom. For example, some parents mentioned that children who were in their last year of preschool before Kindergarten should be in a separate room from three year olds and any four years not attending Kindergarten the following year. They believed the developmental needs of these two groups were different and that by having them in the same room, all the children were not getting exactly what they needed from the ECCE program.

In addition to the child-focused aspects of their children's ECCE programs, parents also commented on their experiences related to communication with their children's ECCE providers, which to most Latino parents was considered an essential component of their children's ECCE programs. Parents were pleased with how they felt "in tune" with their children's progress, and that teachers and staff spoke with them respectfully about their children. Also, parents mentioned liking how they were welcome to come into their children's classroom anytime they desired. Guadalupe illustrated these interactions in the following statement, "[Interviewer: How would you describe your

experiences at Time of Wonder?] Good. Yes, they are very good because at the moment you walk in and they give you attention. They say, ‘good morning,’ and everything and the teacher is constantly giving you information everyday about your child like how he is doing and what he is not doing well in and all of that information. It is very good.”

These experiences of open communication with their children’s ECCE programs likely improved the ways that parents interacted with their children. Through constant communication with ECCE programs mothers learned to interact with their children in developmentally appropriate ways. In addition, by consistently engaging in open communication with their children’s ECCE programs mothers were able to improve their own communication skills such that they could communicate most effectively with their children. Finally, the more communication mothers engaged in with their children’s providers the more they felt comfortable seeking advice, information, and even emotional support from their children’s ECCE programs.

A few parents wished that that teachers would provide written information regarding what their children did throughout the day, as this would help parents have conversations with their children about their days. Using ideas from her older daughter’s ECCE experiences, Aster described how this would be possible in her son’s current ECCE program.

Support families like writing what they learned today because sometimes the kids they don’t tell you. I did this. They don’t tell you what they learned except, ‘nothing.’ ‘I played outside,’ that’s it. ‘We played block area.’ They don’t tell you [what] they did today. They learned this word she used to do that with my son and with my daughter. She is a very excellent teacher and she tell what they learned. Today they learned for example ‘M’ words. ‘M is for monkey,’ you know? They have a paper all the time and a copy [for parents]...I know what she did today so I can ask questions.

A few parents were so disappointed in the level of communication that they had with their children's teachers that they were thinking about leaving the ECCE program. Mercedes felt as though she did not have enough knowledge of her daughter's progress in school. She said it was hard to talk with the teachers about what was happening with her daughter in school because there were different teachers in the classroom in the morning and afternoon. Because of Mercedes work schedule she only had time to speak with the teacher in the afternoon. However this teacher did not know everything that Kristina was doing throughout the day because she usually only spent a few hours with her each day. Consequently, Mercedes mentioned that she was looking for a different ECCE program for her daughter—one that would provide Mercedes with what she considered to be an acceptable level of understanding of her daughter's progress. Finally, Yenee mentioned thinking that certain teachers were not adequately following the Head Start manual. However she did not feel comfortable advocating for the children with the teachers and staff. "That's like immigrant parents' problem. If we say something we don't think we have the power. Yeah, but like Americans they know they are right so they get respect. For us you know, we did not come from this kind—nobody cares about your rights, we came from Africa." The cultural values that held some mothers back from advocating for their children is something that is likely unique to immigrant mothers' experiences interacting with their children's ECCE.

Parents were careful to assess the attention their children were given, as well as how reliable and accountable their children's ECCE programs and providers were. Many parents mentioned that they were happy with the amount of attention their children received at their ECCE program, and this was especially true among parents who had

children with health issues. For these children, ECCE providers often tried hard to support the children and families in whatever ways possible to make their ECCE experiences as enriching as they could even with the children's wavering health. When Isabel enrolled her daughter, Ana in Time of Wonder she did so because the staff seemed to be extremely caring and attentive to the children. This was particularly important to Isabel because at the time of enrollment, Ana was being treated for Leukemia, and due to her treatments and the illness Ana had regressed developmentally. Consequently it was very important that Ana's teachers spend a little extra time with her to help close the gaps between Ana and her peers. Isabel described this experience with Time of Wonder,

She really took strong medicine that would get her sick. Her teacher was really, really helpful. She would give her a little extra attention on the days [Ana] would come in feeling bad because of the medication. She really understood and gave her more attention. She would ask me, 'is she taking medications today?' and 'what can I do?' Things like that. She understood what I was going through in that sense.

However, prior to their current ECCE experiences in NAEYC-accredited, federally funded programs, many parents struggled with a range of irresponsible and untrained child care providers. Providers who did not care for the children at the level parents expected. Some quit without any forethought or notice, perhaps after only a day or two of caring for their children. Mothers recounted providers who consistently arrived late to care for their children so that the mothers ultimately had to quit their jobs. At the extremes, some allowed another adult, not approved by the parents, to care for the children, or perpetuated abusive or neglectful behaviors, shaking the child or not changing diapers.

Juliana originally enrolled her son in center-based care because her friend told her that this type of care was better than using a babysitter (as Juliana was currently doing) to prepare her son for school. However over the course of just three weeks, Juliana had a series of negative interactions with her son's ECCE program. This, coupled with the high cost of the program led Juliana to remove her son from this ECCE program. Ultimately she learned about La Casita del Saber from a friend and was able to enroll him in this program, where he remained until transitioning into Kindergarten. In the following excerpt, Juliana explained one aspect of her frustration and sadness regarding her son's experiences the previous ECCE program. "...there were like three occasions that he came home and he had pooped in his pamper and no one had changed him. So when we got home I would ask him, 'why didn't you tell me no one had changed you?' He was completely covered in poop. I took off his Pampers and I started to cry."

Overall, the child-focused aspects of ECCE programs and providers, communication, and the attention given to children and families, emerged as the most salient areas of immigrant families' ECCE experiences. Some of these were particularly unique to low-income immigrant parents including their focus on language skills, as well as challenges advocating for their children in communications with their children's ECCE providers, and some of the unreliable and in some cases abusive and neglectful ECCE arrangements they encountered.

All of the mothers in this study were enrolled in NAEYC-accredited programs at the time of the study, but their pathways leading to these high-quality programs varied. Mothers had different reasons for initially seeking care that ranged from employment to desiring a program to support their children's English development. Mothers most often

learned about ECCE programs through social connections including friends, family, neighbors, and employers. However, organizational and geographic connections were also important to parents as they sought ECCE. Many mothers faced obstacles including accessibility and affordability to securing care for their children. In these cases mothers were forced to once again mobilize their social, organizational, and geographic connections to find other ECCE options for their children. Mothers' ECCE experiences ranged from extremely high-quality to providers who were abusive and neglectful. Finally, mothers gained access to resources through their relationships with their children's ECCE programs and providers. These important social capital gains are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7: Social Capital Gains from ECCE

In this chapter the final research question focusing on how low-income immigrant mothers built social capital through interactions with their children's ECCE programs is discussed. The benefits families gained from their children's ECCE programs went beyond children being in developmentally appropriate ECCE that mothers were comfortable with while they were employed. Social capital, or the benefits and resources individuals gain from relationships, is particularly important for immigrants in terms of decreasing disadvantage and increasing well-being and child outcomes. However low-income immigrant families tend to have lower levels of social capital.

As mothers interacted with their children's ECCE providers they gained valuable social capital, including: building social relationships with other parents; gathering information from the ECCE providers; and, utilizing material and physical supports offered by their children's ECCE providers. These gains in social capital were particularly important in terms of helping mothers expand their social networks of support, and their knowledge regarding important aspects of parenting. Also, these social capital gains contributed to mothers' knowledge and utilization of various child and family institutions important to the development of young children.

Social Relationships

A number of mothers formed and engaged in new social relationships through their children's ECCE programs. One of the strongest social links was among four Latina mothers, Teresa, Alejandra, Maria, and Marisol, at the River Banks program. These mothers met at River Banks because their children were in the same classroom. All but Teresa had difficulty communicating with the teachers because the teachers did

not speak Spanish. Teresa utilized her limited English skills to help the other three mothers communicate with the teachers. It was not long after this that these four mothers began to meet outside of River Banks, scheduling play dates at local parks and at each others' homes. They enrolled in English classes together and consistently informed one another of any programs and supports they thought would benefit the others. They helped each other with employment—two of the mothers sold Avon products together and two worked at the same McDonald's.

Mothers considered the relationships they formed through interactions at their children's ECCE programs an important benefit of these programs. Maria, one of the four Latinas described above expressed the importance of ECCE not only because her son was learning but also because of the friendships she was able to develop.

...that [my son] can learn new things and that I can get involved with other parents, because at least with them, with Alejandra and Teresa, we have become really good friends and if there is anything going on, any information we are there telling each other, 'hey let's go to this,' or 'did you hear about that?' So we get involved together with the children as well.

Generally these friendships were forged because parents needed support or because of their children's relationships. They usually developed when parents were picking up or dropping off their children at the ECCE, during field trips, or at other common activities outside of ECCE like swimming or dancing lessons. Desta described meeting another mother while on a field trip. As they observed their children's interactions, and spoke with their teachers, they realized their sons did not get along. Consequently, these two mothers came up with a plan to help their children be friends.

When they go to the zoo or have some kind of field trip like that, I go with them. [So have you met any other parents on these field trips?] Yeah, last time my middle son and another boy were having a problem in the school. They don't like

each other, they don't want to play together, so I talked with the mother to see what we could do. She said, 'I have a backyard, just bring him, and we can work together, and see how they react. Just put the two together and see how they play.'

Ultimately Desta and this other mother did not meet for a play date because it was winter and by the time warmer weather arrived, the teachers indicated that their children were getting along much better. In turn, their urgency to get together to help their children's relationships faded.

In some cases these friendships were initiated by teachers, particularly when parents needed a certain type of support, like transportation, that another parent might be able to provide. When Maria did not have transportation to River Banks one of the teachers introduced her to another mother, Vanessa, who was willing to drive Maria and her son, Emanuel to and from the center each day. If Vanessa's daughter was sick or if Vanessa had to work and could not drive Maria and Emanuel, they took the bus as they would have without Vanessa's support. During the car rides to their ECCE program Vanessa provided Maria with a lot more than just transportation. Being native born and raised in the U.S. she gave Maria a lot of information regarding the education system in the U.S.

The development of the relationship between Maria and Vanessa, which crossed linguistic, racial, and country of origin (COO) lines was not common. In general mothers tended to forge relationships with other mothers who were of similar racial and linguistic backgrounds. Mothers' relationships did cross religious lines, with outwardly Muslim mothers befriending very openly Christian women. Also, being from the same COO did not seem to matter to these mothers, as there were many women who were friends with

mothers from other COOs. However, the common thread was usually language, with mothers who spoke Arabic developing friendships with each other and mothers who spoke Spanish befriending one another.

Mothers utilized these friendships with other parents for a variety of parenting supports that included logistical support, informational support, and emotional support. In terms of logistical support, as indicated above, transportation was often shared among mothers. This was particularly common among mothers with children in the River Banks program, which was located in a suburban area. In addition to transportation, parents relied on one another for child care both at each others' homes but also at activities that their children had in common. Many of the children at La Casita del Saber attended swimming lessons and dancing lessons outside of school. Because mothers worked and were enrolled in school, they could not always go with their children to each of these activities. In turn, they relied on one another for child care at these activities. For example, when Perla's parenting classes conflicted with her daughter, Rosa's dance class on Tuesdays, another mother, Daniela, was able to watch Rosa while she was in her lesson. Consequently, Daniela knew she could later rely on Perla for the same type of care at either swimming or dance lessons.

...sometimes parents work but maybe help with a ride, maybe watch my child for example. Now I am taking parenting classes here (at La Casita del Saber) Tuesdays and Thursdays, and one mom helped me last Tuesday and watched Rosa while she was at ballet. It was Daniela.

Mothers relied on one another for information and would generally call each other—this was particularly common among some of the African parents. Usually this was regarding information about the ECCE program, in terms of upcoming activities or

things that were happening in the classroom. Halima described meeting another mother and exchanging phone numbers, and told me that they “talk with each other about what happened in school—is this true, did this happen in class?” In addition to gathering information regarding classroom activities, mothers called one another on the phone for emotional support, particularly regarding things like employment. Makeda described speaking with Sisi about her employment experiences because Sisi, a mother from Ghana, also worked as a home health aid. Makeda had a few tough and risky cases. Being in the same profession, Sisi could identify with Makeda’s experiences and offer advice. Sometimes they would talk about each of their girls, but a lot of times their conversations would solely focus on the challenges of their careers.

Many parents who met at their children’s ECCE programs would get together socially and spend time at each others’ homes or at the park. They met on the weekends, during the summer or on holidays when the ECCE was closed. Isabela described her experiences with a couple of mothers from Time of Wonder.

Some of them are parents of my daughter’s classmates—two actually. I talk all the time with one of them and on some weekends we go to the park with the girls. The other one I talk to sometimes like when they are on break we go to their house or the park...I have known them since the girls started school.

As Isabel indicated these relationships often developed when their children began attending ECCE and some friendships were stronger than others.

Rather than forming new friendships through their children’s ECCE program other mothers strengthened already existing social relationships during the course of their interactions with their children’s ECCE programs. This meant spending more time with these parents now that they had children in the same ECCE program. Also they relied on

these mothers' "insider" information regarding the logistics of the ECCE programs.

These included aspects of the programs that some parents initially were not as comfortable with or did not understand very well. Sharon explained how a friend who she knew prior to enrolling in River Banks would answer any of her questions.

Therefore if there is something I don't understand or something I know I've been through already, and I am about to go through it, I just ask her... yea, these home visits that the Head Start was conducting, and I wasn't sure what it was that was happening, so I talked to her, and she said, 'oh, it's nothing.'

These friends were also available when Sharon needed support with transportation to River Banks.

Finally, there were some mothers who did not engage in social relationships with other parents in their children's ECCE programs, beyond saying hello to other parents when they brought their children to and from the program. When asked about this, they remarked that this lack of socializing with other parents was not because they were not interested in spending time with others. Instead, between their responsibilities as mothers, being employed full time or more than full time, and for some going to school, they simply did not have time to socialize with other parents. Marisa, who picked up Beatriz at 5:30PM every night at La Casita del Saber after finishing work and English class, described these competing demands.

At school there is no relationship, just 'hi, how are you?' Just like that because first of all we don't have time, we have to work, pick up Beatriz, and we have to go back to make dinner. So, just 'hi, how was your day?'

Overall, parents engaged in social relationships with other parents at their children's ECCE programs for support in their parenting. They turned to other mothers for logistical support, information, and emotional support. These relationships did not

often cross linguistic or racial barriers, and there were many parents who simply did not have the time to create these relationships. However for the mothers who did develop social relationships through their children's ECCE programs, they saw these relationships as being a very important aspect of the ECCE program experience.

Information Sharing

A second form of social capital that immigrant mothers gained through interactions with their children's ECCE programs was information regarding a variety of areas, including: parenting; transition to Kindergarten; health care; and, community social programs available for families. As Guadalupe explained, the information that parents received was very important and helpful to mothers.

...more than anything you learn from [the ECCE program] a lot because there are times when you are a mother for the first time and you don't know what you are supposed to do with them.

ECCE programs imparted information regarding the aforementioned areas to mothers in a few different ways. On a daily basis parents were in communication with their children's ECCE programs as they would drop off and pick up their children. In addition to daily, informal encounters, mothers gained a lot of knowledge through formal meetings like one-on-one parent-teacher conferences, home visits, as well as parenting workshops that the ECCE programs organized to teach parents new skills. Finally some programs would provide parents with written information in the form of books, brochures, or notices on various topics.

Information on parenting, which mothers gathered from their children's ECCE programs, included the following topics: developmentally appropriate ways of interacting

with children; nutrition; and behavioral issues. Mothers mentioned learning a lot from their children's ECCE programs about interacting with their children to promote their cognitive, socioemotional, and linguistic development. Some mothers talked about beginning to understand the importance of reading to their children, as well as helping their children write, learn their colors, numbers, and letters. They also talked about improving their communication skills with their children as well as learning how to foster their children's abilities to interact with other children at the ECCE.

Desta mentioned learning from her ECCE program through parent-teacher conferences and parenting workshops the importance of reading to children. She took this advice so seriously that even on nights when she was working, and her mother who did not speak or read English and did not read Amharic was taking care of the children, she made sure to have books rented from the library that included tapes.

...I thought when they stay in school the teacher read the story to them. But when they tell us before bedtime to read the story to them and to spend time with them and the story book, then I thought 'Ooo,' and I went to library every three weeks. I rented the book and read it to them. Even when I'm not home, if my mom is home she doesn't speak English well but I have a tape recorder of the story book. Yeah the library have that one, so I told my mom just put this one and they sit down and listen to the story. And when I come back the next day I ask them about the story. [Or], I call and say "you guys listening to the story" they say "yes" so I tell them if you have any questions remember [them] so we can talk about the story. So that's the thing with me was the story book that I was like 'ah, I'll do that.'

On the evenings that Desta was home she would read to her children, but the above strategy ensured that even when she was working her children were still having reading time each night.

Isabel enrolled in English classes shortly after her children began ECCE at Time of Wonder. She described the ways that her children's ECCE taught her to help her

daughters with their learning. Often she would work on her English homework as the children completed their school work.

...They always tell me what I need to help them with at home, whether it be writing their names, or the colors, teaching them how to hold a pencil—just practicing more in general. On weekends, I tell them to cut things out or have them do other activities. Or, I'll have them do their homework and I do mine.

For some mothers information on socioemotional development that parents gathered through their children's ECCE programs was most helpful. For example, Makeda was worried that her daughter was too quiet and not talking enough in school even though outside of school she talked a lot. The family service workers at the ECCE program helped Makeda work on this with her daughter, by encouraging Makeda to stay in her daughter's classroom for about 20 to 30 minutes each morning until she became comfortable. Over time Makeda's daughter began to speak more while at the ECCE and Makeda learned more about developmentally appropriate practices by being in her daughter's classroom for a half hour every morning.

Many mothers mentioned how much they learned about nutrition and the importance of feeding nutritional food to their children through the ECCE programs. They gathered this information by observing what the programs were feeding their children throughout the day. This informed mothers about food that they did not realize their children liked. For example, Elsa shared that until she saw her daughter eating broccoli at school she did not know her daughter liked this vegetable, and now, "I make sure I make meals that include broccoli." In addition to seeing what their children were eating in school that is nutritious, ECCE programs also put together workshops that were focused on cooking nutritious food. At La Casita del Saber there was an organic garden

in part of the program's outdoor play area, and so parents and children were able to observe the vegetables growing. Also, the program coordinated parent meetings to teach parents how to cook meals from the vegetables in the garden that children could help prepare in developmentally appropriate ways, and that children would like to eat.

However, despite providing helpful information regarding nutrition sometimes program nutritionists' information was not helpful or just plain wrong. Maria explained that the nutritionist at her son's ECCE program "sent me a form saying that he is overweight." The following week she took her son, Emanuel to his pediatrician and mentioned what the nutritionist had told her—the pediatrician informed her, "that he was fine. She told me that he was not overweight."

In addition to developmentally appropriate practices and nutrition, ECCE programs also provided parents with support and information to manage behavioral challenges that their children faced. Mothers discussed basic issues including: children not listening when parents asked them to do something; disagreements between siblings; and, jealousy when a new baby was born. For these types of challenges teachers were able to provide mothers with a sounding board and advice regarding how to manage their children's behaviors. When Selena noticed her daughter Savanna becoming jealous after the birth of her younger brother, Savanna's teachers at La Casita del Saber taught Selena ways of quelling this jealousy. They suggested that Selena allow Savanna to help with aspects of her brother's daily care and routine, if she wanted to do so—"so that is what she said—I have to include her more. When I am changing him if she wants to help, then I let her."

Sometimes if teachers knew certain behaviors were happening at home that the mothers were not happy about they would talk with the children about their behaviors—whether the parent asked the teacher to or not. Mothers generally appreciated this support. On the morning I interviewed Perla at La Casita del Saber, she frantically scurried through the reception area of the school on her way to Miss Binata’s classroom, letting me know she would return in a few minutes. About 10 minutes later she returned, and apologetically explained that Mark had scratched Rosa near her eye, and she needed to tell Miss Binata about this. Rather than just listening to Perla and moving on with her day, Miss Binata spent a few moments talking with Mark and Rosa about working harder to get along with one another. Perla seemed very pleased with how Miss Binata spoke with the children, and appreciated Miss Binata’s support of her parenting efforts.

For a few mothers their children’s behaviors were more challenging, so they not only relied on teachers but also counselors and psychologists available at their children’s ECCE programs. Mercedes daughter had severe behavior issues when she first began at Time of Wonder. The counselor at Time of Wonder spent six months working with Mercedes to help her learn how to manage her daughter’s outbursts. Mercedes indicated that talking with this counselor helped a lot because she did “not want to repeat [with her daughters] the ways [she] was treated by her mother.”

Parents also gathered information on the logistics of enrolling in Kindergarten. For the parents in Spring Valley this information was specifically related to Kindergarten registration. In addition to helping parents with registration, River Banks, the ECCE program in Spring Valley held a meeting every fall for former Head Start parents whose children had recently entered Kindergarten to ensure this transition was going smoothly.

The programs in the District of Columbia provided parents with not only registration information for the neighborhood public schools, but they also tried to familiarize parents with the process for enrolling in charter schools, where 28,000 children in DC were enrolled in school.

La Casita del Saber held a series of meetings for parents to learn about how to select a charter school, the reasons to consider using a charter school, as well as how to enter their children in lotteries at various schools. During these meetings there were representatives from various bilingual charter schools available to talk with parents. La Casita del Saber also provided parents with a compendium of all the charter schools in DC that listed information about their locations, test scores, demographics, and other important data, which parents utilized to decide lotteries in which to enter their children. Parents studied these books emphatically to determine where they hoped their children would attend elementary school. At Time of Wonder, they not only provided parents with the compendium of charter school choices but they also arranged visits for parents and children to a few local, neighborhood and charter elementary schools. This enabled parents to ask questions of the teachers and staff at these schools before enrolling, and it helped the children get a better sense of what Kindergarten would be like for them.

Consequently, through a series of group meetings and individual meetings with parents, as well as meetings at various elementary schools the programs provided information on the process of selecting and enrolling children in charter schools. This information included navigating the lottery system that the charter schools used, as well as talking with parents about the schools they believed might best suit each child.

Daniela described how the program director at La Casita del Saber helped her with this process for her older daughter.

I did not know what to do to find a good school. The director that was working at La Casita del Saber at the time told me, 'Look, we have options for Deirdre. What do you want for her? Do you want her to attend a bilingual school or an only English school? Do you want it close to your house? What do you want?' I told her I wanted the best...

With the guidance of the director, Daniela enrolled Deirdre in a trilingual school, where in addition to Spanish and English, she could learn French as well. Daniela was very pleased with this school, and that her younger daughter, Laura was also able to attend.

Parents mentioned gathering information on free dental and medical services that they could use for their children, as Alejandra explained.

They give us information related to if you don't have documentation they send bulletins saying, if you don't have medicine or money there are consultations there for free and everything. They give lots of information because sometimes they have meetings at these places and you have to go there [to receive free services].

ECCE programs imparted information on health and health care services to mothers. Mothers discussed receiving reminders from their children's ECCE programs about getting their children immunized and scheduling annual doctor visits. They remarked that getting these reminders was very helpful.

Finally, mothers received information on other child- and family-related programs from their children's ECCE programs, including government assistance programs, various kinds of therapies for their children, and summer camps and programs. This information was sometimes solicited by the parent but particularly in relation to therapies children might need, these were generally initiated by the program. Information

regarding various programs was usually given to parents by a variety of people including classroom teachers, family service workers and program directors.

Material and Physical Supports

A final form of social capital that parents gained from their children's ECCE programs were material and physical supports. These supports included: connections to social, health, and community services; finding employment; and, providing food and clothing. In addition to giving basic information to parents on various supports in the community, many programs acted like social workers for mothers. They helped mothers complete applications for receiving support, accompanied mothers to agencies, and spoke on the telephone to social workers for mothers, continuously advocating for mothers and acting as liaisons between mothers and government support agencies. Parents could print their Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) vouchers at River Banks rather than having to make a separate trip to the local WIC office. Also, family service workers often supported parents in applying for programs like WIC, Section 8, as well as smaller programs like energy assistance.

Aster, an Ethiopian mother of three, who had a few challenging interactions with the local social services office turned to Melissa the family service worker at River Banks for help when her gas was turned off after she could not pay her bill. Aster was unable to pay her gas bill because she had recently cut her hours to be home with her older son who could not be in afterschool care because of his behavior issues. Aster described the support she received from Melissa at River Banks.

“[So what do you do if there is a month that you cannot pay the electric or gas?] I keep it for next month. [Do they charge you extra?] Yeah, like last time we didn't have gas, they cut it off—for like 20 days I didn't have gas. I couldn't cook, and

it was cold. Even the heat wasn't working until I got money, and you know I paid half, and Miss Melissa (referring to the family services worker at River Banks), she helped me with assistance like they (the government through an energy assistance program) pay \$100 for me, and I pay like \$200 [So they have an assistance program?] I don't know something that they have and they paid \$100 and I pay like \$200, and they put the gas back.”

In addition to connecting parents with various government programs, and providing actual material support to parents, ECCE programs also helped parents secure experts and therapists that their children needed including nutritionists, as well as speech and physical therapists. Valeria described how Time of Wonder assisted her in finding therapy for a problem that her daughter had with her feet.

They also worry about their health, like if they are missing therapy or they are up to date with their medical examinations. If they are missing therapy they look for a therapist. ...They asked me if I wanted a therapist to come to my house to do an evaluation for my daughter because there was something wrong with her feet. It was because of them [Time of Wonder] the therapist was sent.

Valeria's use of a physical therapist for her daughter was initiated by Time of Wonder. However, in other cases parents went to the ECCE program and initiated searches for specialists for their children. When Sisi was having challenges with her daughter's eating habits she talked with her daughter's teachers and they found Sisi a nutritionist that came to her house and helped them work through these eating issues.

Moreover, not only did ECCE programs connect mothers with other programs for support, but they also provided important services within the ECCE programs. At the River Banks program a local dentist would visit a couple times a year and clean the children's teeth whose parents could not afford outside dental care. In addition sometimes parents received material support from their children's ECCE. Rather than

using local shelters or food pantries, some parents received clothing and food from their children's ECCE programs when times were really tight.

Finally, some parents obtained employment support from their ECCE programs including English classes and in some cases, job training. ECCE programs provided training for work in early childhood care and education, as well as financial support for attending English classes at local community colleges. Some ECCE programs offered parents opportunities to train to become substitute teachers and work in the classrooms to determine their level of interest in a career in ECCE. Many parents used these experiences as springboards for starting a Child Development Associate, the necessary certification to work in an ECCE classroom as an assistant teacher. During my tenure observing at River Banks, Aster, who had been substitute teaching at River Banks as well as other Head Start programs throughout Spring Valley, was hired during the last week of school to be an assistant teacher the following year. Other ECCE programs helped parents enroll and pay for English classes at the local community college, which contributed to improving their job prospects.

In sum, parents relied on their children's ECCE programs for more than caring for their children in developmentally appropriate ways. ECCE programs offered opportunities for these low-income immigrant mothers to build social capital in the forms of social relationships, information, and physical and material supports. Mothers felt safe and comfortable seeking out help from their children's ECCE programs, and as a result, these programs were sometimes central to community and government support immigrant parents received. The social relationships that mothers formed were particularly important in providing them with information as well as physical and emotional support.

Mothers received a wealth of information from their children's ECCE programs. This ranged from information on parenting, Kindergarten enrollment, health care and other programs which helped parents better understand how to navigate U.S. society. Overall, ECCE programs provided mothers with necessary support to obtain the services important to the well-being of their children and families'.

Chapter 8: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to better understand the experiences of immigrant mothers with young children in the U.S. Specifically, the aims of this research were to investigate how immigrant mothers, with unique immigration stories, negotiated parenting ideas and practices from their countries of origin (COOs) with those of a new host society. Also, this study explored how these mothers navigated the ECCE system and used this system to create social capital to support their parenting efforts. This study adds to existing bodies of research, including: 1) women's experiences of immigration; 2) ECCE decision making; and, 3) the social function of ECCE. Moreover, this research makes important theoretical contributions by bringing together Berry's (2006) acculturation framework, the development of parental ethnotheories, and ecocultural theory. Finally, this research contributes to the study of immigrant families methodologically, particularly in terms of using qualitative methods to understand more about the diversity of immigrant families' experiences

Research Contributions

Women's immigration experiences. The first body of research to which this study contributed was women's immigration experiences. In particular, this project provided insight into the complex experiences of women as they decided to migrate, made the journey to a new host society, and finally as they adjusted to life in a new country. All of these processes were influenced by mothers' families of origin, families of procreation, and their documentation statuses. The majority of literature focused on immigration experiences examines this from the perspective of individuals' adjustment once they arrive in the new host society including behavioral, emotional such as

acculturative stress (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987), psychological and sociocultural (Ward, 1996) shifts. Despite acculturation scholars (Berry, 1997) espousing the importance of understanding immigrants' reasons for migrating as well as the human capital with which they migrate, very limited research has considered this among women and specifically mothers.

Not until the 1980's, did researchers begin to consider the importance of women's immigration experiences--previous research focused solely on men's experiences immigrating to a new country (Dion & Dion, 2001). Although there is more research in this area today, what we know about women's immigration experiences from various regions of origin remains limited. On the surface, mothers' reasons for coming to the U.S. in some cases seemed spontaneous and unplanned. However, underneath this lack of planning and spontaneity were immigration decisions that were very much contingent on family. Mothers in this study came to the U.S. because they were either following spouses, boyfriends, or other family members, reunifying with parents or siblings, or trying to support the financial, health, or child care needs of their families. Even among the few mothers who did not choose to migrate based on families' needs or desires, they ultimately chose to remain in the U.S. for their family of procreation, specifically their children.

Previous research has shed light on women's immigration as gendered experiences, particularly as they were shaped by men. Specifically Hondagneu-Sotelo (1992) considered the impact of spousal separations during migration and found that more lengthy separations caused by husbands immigrating to the U.S. months and years before wives led to more egalitarian gender roles when spouses reunited in the U.S.

These studies also highlighted the shifting of Latino cultural values like *marianismo* and *machismo* to encompass more of what life is like for Latino men and women in more egalitarian cultures. For example, *marianismo* may begin to be more reflective of the ways women financially contribute to family and children or how it is that women maintain responsibility for orchestrating children's care and education even when they are employed outside the home.

Very few, if any studies have considered women's immigration decisions as contingent on not just men, but on families of origin and procreation. In turn, our assumptions about the experiences of immigration may be biased by only considering influences of the couple relationship on immigration. Mothers' decisions to migrate to the U.S. contingent on their families' needs, reflects the notion of *familismo*, or the paramount importance of families among Latinos. Among Africans, from the Africentric perspective we can see migration contingent on family really reflects ideas of communalism or an interpersonal orientation that is emphasized among these families. Understanding these familial reasons for immigrating and remaining in the U.S. that seem to be particularly unique to women, provides insight into how these women ultimately adjusted to being in a new host society. Specifically, if mothers do not feel as though they chose to come to a new host culture, it may be more difficult for them to adjust psychologically. This may be why many mothers talked about returning to their COOs. Of course, most did not plan to return until their children were grown and could remain in the U.S. without them, providing further support for the ways families of procreation shaped mothers' choices to stay in the U.S.

Given that mothers' decisions to immigrate were often contingent on the needs of their family, many women left behind careers and the pursuit of university degrees in their COOs. One mother went from being a nurse in El Salvador to working in a fast food restaurant in Virginia; while another mother discontinued pursuing her medical degree when she came to the U.S. It is likely the loss of education and career paths, which shaped women's identities in their COOs, contributed to mothers' psychological adjustment to life in U.S. Many of these mothers enrolled in English classes upon arriving in the U.S. but very few of the African mothers and possibly only one of the Latinas had strong enough English language skills to enroll in college courses to work towards their degree equivalencies in the U.S. In addition some of these mothers' social classes changed when they migrated, others were poor in their COOs and remained poor in the U.S. Regardless, all of the immigrant mothers in this study were faced with strategizing raising children with limited resources.

Low-income immigrant mothers are often portrayed as uneducated homemakers who clean houses and office buildings, take care of other peoples' children, and work in the kitchens of fast food restaurants. This study made visible the professional lives that some women left in their COOs. Most mothers indicated that they wanted to finish their university degrees, as well as pursue their careers but with limited knowledge of English and necessary resources many were unable to do so. Just as there were mothers who had professional careers and who were pursuing education when they left their COOs, there were mothers who left their COOs illiterate and with only two years of formal schooling, as well as mothers who had never worked outside the home. Consequently, this study illustrates the heterogeneity of immigrant mothers' experiences prior to coming to the

U.S., which ultimately contributed to their experiences as they adjusted to a new host society. Much of the research focused on immigration and acculturation reduces individuals' experiences to a "type" or a set of common "experiences" as we see with Berry's (2006) work.

In addition to leaving behind the pursuit of a university degree, as well as their careers, some women also left behind children. These decisions were based on documentations issues, as well as children being too young to travel to the U.S. All parents intended to reunite with their children, but issues of documentation made this difficult, and in some cases impossible. In turn, these mothers left not only their children in their COOs but all that which surrounds mothering—daily routines, intimate relationships, and their own identities as mothers-- which they ultimately recreated in the U.S. They were no longer able to be involved physically in their children's daily lives, and relied on telephone and computers to communicate. Moreover, mothers' ideas regarding mothering were recreated as they adjusted to the U.S. and learned more about child rearing in the U.S., and began implementing new discipline techniques or new ways of interacting with their children who were in the U.S. with them.

Finally, mothers discussed the level of responsibility and as some termed it, "independence" from family that they felt as parents in the U.S. Although there was a sense of empowerment that came with this independence, feeling solely responsible for everything related to one's children often brought on feelings of stress. Noh and colleagues (1992) theorized that stress emerges in immigrant women from a high level of responsibility, and can be explained by what they called the "double burden hypothesis". Specifically, this hypothesis indicates that the increased responsibilities and role overload

from taking care of the children, working outside the home, and maintaining the home, leads to negative psychological outcomes, including depression (Noh, Wu, Speechley, & Kaspar, 1992). Mothers in this study considered life more fast-paced and difficult because of increased responsibilities and expectations placed on parents coupled with limited family resources. At the same time many mothers thought life was better in the U.S., because of all the institutional and government supports available to children and families, but life was not necessarily easier.

ECCE decision making. ECCE decision making is the second body of research to which these findings added. In particular, this study illustrated the decision making process low-income, immigrant mothers in the DC metro area experienced as they looked for and selected ECCE for their children. This process reflected how low-income, immigrant mothers navigated the ECCE system, including: reasons for entering the ECCE system, desired characteristics of ECCE, connections to ECCE, obstacles for entering ECCE, and ECCE experiences. In addition, aspects of this process emerged as being potentially unique to immigrants.

Mothers decided to look for ECCE for both parent- and child-focused reasons. The parent-related reasons mothers discussed reflected previous findings related to employment being the most important reason that mothers sought care for their children (Kim & Fram, 2009). Child-focused reasons including aspects of preparing children for Kindergarten also reflected findings of previous research (Brookman & Blanton, 2003). In addition to replicating previous findings, this study found immigrant mothers' considerations of their own mental health as a reason to look for ECCE, to be unique from previous findings. In turn, looking for ECCE for parents' mental health reasons

may be somewhat unique to immigrant mothers in comparison to native-born mothers, as they cope with the stress that comes with adjusting to living in a new country while at the same time transitioning to parenthood. In addition, learning how to parent without the helping hands of family, feeling overwhelmed at the responsibility of parenting may lead to mental health difficulties and in turn, immigrant mothers' likelihood of looking for ECCE. In general, mothers who previously experienced depression sought ECCE to support them in focusing on adjusting to life in the U.S. including taking classes, while their children were cared for by a trusted provider. For other mothers in this study, ECCE meant fewer hours caring for their children—or using ECCE to create the helping hands they needed to compensate for limited physical support from family -- and consequently, less stress.

Moreover, the factors that shaped mothers' ECCE choices, reflected what other studies have found in terms of quality, cost, and convenience being linked with ECCE decision making (Peyton, Jacobs, O'Brien, & Roy, 2001), and that logistics like convenient location and hours of operation seemed to be more important to mothers who were employed outside the home (Kim & Fram, 2009). However this study did not find what previous studies indicate, that immigrant parents, particularly Latinas prefer to use relative care (Buriel & Hurtado-Ortiz, 2000). Among the mothers in this study, using relative care or center-based care was a function of cost and convenience, not necessarily preference. In addition, mothers were extremely intentional and mindful about the care they chose for their children. They knew specifically what they wanted in an ECCE program or provider and what they did not want.

Findings from this study also indicate some reasons related to decision making that may be specific to immigrant families. In particular, mothers discussed the importance of language of the programs and providers, and these preferences for language varied over time. For example, when children were younger, and parents were less familiar with the ECCE system mothers were more apt to have their children in informal care where the providers spoke the mothers' native tongues. Over time as children got older, and mothers' knowledge of the importance of their children learning English increased, and parents understood more about the ECCE system, finding a program that would support their children's bilingualism or at the very least their children learning English became paramount.

In addition to languages of providers, some parents mentioned diversity as an important characteristic of their children's ECCE programs. Of course, diversity is something that non-immigrant parents consider an important characteristic as they seek ECCE for their children. However it seems the way immigrant mothers thought about diversity in their children's ECCE program was slightly different than native-born parents—they considered how their children could learn about other cultures such that their children were better integrated into U.S. society. Consequently, some parents looked for their children's ECCE program to perform a social function related to teaching their children about the mainstream host society.

These findings indicate a decision-making *process* rather than simply a bundle of factors that are linked with child care selection. In turn, parents used a variety of connections to look for ECCE. Very limited research has considered the selection of ECCE as more than a group of characteristics of care, which parents consider as they

make their decisions. However this study sheds light on how parents, armed with the characteristics they hoped to find for their children in ECCE, consulted social and institutional connections, as well as took time to physically look within their neighborhoods to find ECCE for their children. Each time mothers looked for new ECCE arrangements they did not necessarily use the same connections they used previously to find care. As time went by mothers increased both their institutional and social connections, and consequently were able to use these more to find care as their children got older. Also, as mothers changed cities and states they carried with them their knowledge of institutions from their previous residences, and used this knowledge to make new institutional connections in their new neighborhoods, while they began creating additional local social connections, and using new geographic connections.

Mothers faced many challenges as they tried to secure ECCE for their children. One of the obstacles that emerged as unique to immigrant mothers compared to native-born parents was related to documentation needed for enrollment in various ECCE programs. Specifically, some of the Latina mothers experienced challenges related to providing documentation related to residency to enroll in certain programs. In particular, these programs asked for proof-of-address information, which was difficult to produce for mothers who rented a room or a few rooms, without signing a lease. In turn, some of the mothers in this study sought ECCE programs in which limited paperwork and documentation related to residency was required.

In addition, this study shed light on not only what these obstacles were for mothers but also how mothers dealt with these challenges. Previous survey research provides information on what these obstacles might be but it does not indicate *how*

mothers deal with these challenges. In addition, a lot of quantitative research regarding ECCE selection focuses on the type of programs parents ultimately end up in rather than considering the sometimes many failed attempts at securing care. This was the case with Elsa's first care arrangement for her daughter—she wanted center-based care, but she could not find a high quality program that had space available so she ultimately utilized informal care. In the case of Elsa, surveys would only capture the arrangement she was in at the time of the survey rather than how she got there or what she really wanted for her daughter—possibly discounting the challenges she faced.

Mothers' experiences in their ECCE arrangements at the time of the interviews were quite positive, which was most likely a function of being in an accredited, high-quality program. However mothers discussed their previous ECCE experiences, and in some cases indicated very negative interactions with their children's care providers. This provided a glimpse into some of the low quality programs and providers that immigrant parents may be forced to turn to because of cost and availability.

Overall, this study provided new insight into the ways that immigrant parents navigate and select ECCE for their children. The findings illustrated a process rather than a group of variables that matter for decisions regarding ECCE. In addition, this research pointed to aspects of this decision-making process that may be specific to immigrant mothers as they adjust to being parents in a new society with new social structures and supports.

Social function of ECCE. A third body of research to which this study added new knowledge is related to the social function of ECCE. Specifically, this study shows how ECCE programs can function as supports for immigrant parents of young children as

they negotiate parenting ideas and practices, and as they navigate child-and family-related institutions to raise their children in a new country. Reflecting aspects of social capital theory particularly in terms of reciprocal relationships and information channels (Coleman, 1988), parents used their children's ECCE programs to develop relationships that insured trust as well as physical and material benefits.

Moreover the findings from this study provide groundwork for considering that the social function ECCE may provide for society (Vandenbroeck, 2006), starts with the social function ECCE's provide for families. Previous research on the social function of ECCE, which is very limited, considers how ECCE is important for society in terms of issues of social justice, inclusion, and exclusion by discussing the importance of providing access to high quality care to those who are less advantaged (Vandenbroeck, 2006). Others have considered the social function of ECCE by understanding how ECCE programs and providers focus on 'celebrating diversity' among children and families, by considering the importance of contact between parents and teachers, and the interactions between children and teachers and among children with each other, and how to foster social inclusion through these interactions (Fukkink, 2008; Vandenbroeck, 2006). However, this research only considered the contact that occurs between parents and teachers, and focused more of the relationships among children and with teachers in the classroom as routes for fostering inclusion and a celebration of diversity.

Consequently, this study added a new dimension to our understanding of the social function of ECCE, and that is, the social function ECCE performs for immigrant families was to facilitate immigrants' adjustment to a new society as parents. First, similar to the work of Mario Small (2009), the mothers in this study developed social

relationships with other parents at their children's ECCE program. This adds to Small's (2009) research in that this study specifically examined specifically the experiences of *immigrant* families. Small's (2009) study considered families from a variety of demographic backgrounds, without considering sub-group dynamics, which may have masked what was happening for specific groups. In turn, the findings from this study provided insight into the ways social relationships unfolded among immigrant mothers using ECCE.

Despite the prominence of the development of social relationships in Small's (2009) work, among the mothers in this study these relationships were not as commonplace as was expected. There were some mothers who indeed created social relationships through their children's ECCE programs and relied on these connections for emotional, physical, and informational support. Mothers with these social relationships generally considered these to be very important connections and supports. However there were many mothers who indicated not having time to develop new relationships because of their busy work schedules. In addition, it may be the development of social relationships was deterred because of issues related to trust unique to immigrant mothers. This idea needs to be unpacked more in future research.

Some of the mothers in Small's (2009) study indicated having limited time because of work. Despite this they still developed and maintained ties with others in their children's ECCE programs. In turn, it may be more than just time that inhibited immigrant mothers' social relationships. Small (2009) indicated from his study that parents have limited time to create, develop, and sustain relationships. Despite this some ECCE programs are arranged so that parents are regularly brought together through

fieldtrips, parent meetings, and fundraising events. In a sense the ECCE programs create circumstances that make it hard for parents to avoid becoming friendly with one another.

The three field sites in this study did create opportunities for parents to come together for field trips and meetings, but it was often the same few parents in each program who volunteered and participated each time. This was particularly true of the River Banks program, whereas the teachers at La Casita del Saber constantly encouraged all of the parents to volunteer and participate and in turn, had more parents who participated and volunteered at the program than River Banks. Despite this there were fewer social relationships that developed among parents at La Casita del Saber, and one of the strongest social connections was among four mothers at River Banks. These mothers initially came together at River Banks because Teresa helped translate with the ECCE teachers at certain points when the teachers who were bilingual in Spanish and English were not available for translation purposes.

In turn, the findings of this study show that something different happened in these centers in terms of the development of social relationships, than what Small (2009) found—social relationships among mothers were less prominent and in addition to coming together through field trips and other meetings, parents seemed to connect based on needs unique to immigrants, like translation. Overall, however, these relationships were far less common than what Small (2009) found in his study.

This study moved beyond only considering the social relationships that mothers developed at their children's ECCE by also examining the various kinds of information that mothers received from these programs, as well as the connections they made with other institutions via ECCE. Use of ECCE as an information channel reflected one type

of social capital as described in Coleman's (1988) theory of social capital. In particular, parents gathered information focused on parenting, the transition to Kindergarten, health care, as well as community social programs for families, from their children's ECCE programs.

The information that ECCE programs provided was necessary for these immigrant mothers to have to understand more about how to navigate U.S. society with young children. For example, information regarding Kindergarten was important for all of the mothers, but for the mothers in Washington, DC information regarding the charter school system that their ECCE programs gave them was vital to securing spaces in schools that would best suit their children's needs. Specifically, ECCE programs provided parents with knowledge regarding selecting and applying to the various charter schools in Washington, DC. This enabled mothers to continue their children's bilingual education as well as bypass some of the neighborhood schools which were low performing and not what they wanted for their children.

Finally, in some ways ECCE programs acted as social workers by linking parents with important government-sponsored programs, providing them with food and clothing when needed, and even helping them attain the necessary skills for employment. For each of these mothers their children's ECCE program was an institution they very much trusted and consequently relied on for various types of child- and family-supports. These sorts of connections reflected notions of Dryfoos's (1994) ideas related to full-service schools as well as the work of the Harlem Children's Zone (www.hcz.org), which was considered by President Barack Obama as the model for education reform. Both the full-service school and the Harlem Children's Zone reflect ideas that working with children

and their families by not only providing information but also by providing material and physical support through connections to the community is imperative for children's success.

Overall, the findings from this study related to the social function of ECCE are grounded in social capital theory, particularly in terms of social relationships and information channels, and they add to what we know about the important social function of ECCE, which also includes connections to various social and community programs. Specifically, these findings provide insight into the importance of the social function of ECCE programs, particularly for immigrant families. In addition this study elucidated *how* ECCE programs can perform this social function to best work with immigrant families and communities.

Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to a few theoretical areas including: acculturation theory, development of parental ethnotheories, as well as ecocultural theory. It brings these theoretical frameworks together in a new way, adding to and utilizing each framework's unique characteristics to explain how immigrants adjust to being parents in a new host society. The model in Figure 3 (see page 98), related to parenting practices and experiences of immigrants, that emerged from this study reflected a coming together of different theories to explain how these low-income, immigrant mothers negotiated their parenting ideas and practices in the U.S.

First, the data revealed aspects of Berry's (2006) acculturation strategies framework, which was based on considering two dimensions of adjusting to a new society: 1) maintenance of culture and identity, and 2) relations sought with other groups.

Berry argues that individuals who are integrated, which is considered the ideal acculturation strategy in terms of individual well-being, interact with the new host culture while maintaining their culture and identity. Certainly mothers in this study who were involved in U.S. ECCE programs were interacting with the new host society to some extent as they were raising their children in the U.S. Also, many mothers maintained aspects of their cultures and their identities. However in relation to parenting this maintenance of culture and identity was not absolute, and consequently, this study provided a clearer understanding of the nuances of this process for immigrant *mothers* specifically.

In some ways this study also challenges Berry's (2006) notions of integration, regarding the "maintenance of culture and identity," and pushes acculturation scholars to consider further what is meant by this, particularly among mothers of young children. All of the mothers maintained at least aspects of their cultural identities, which were reflected by the fact that mothers wanted to instill the values of their COOs including the importance of family and respect for elders, in their children. However mothers discussed certain skills based on U.S. ideas, like communication and independence, that they believed were important for their children to develop to be successful. Moreover, the strategies that parents intended to use to instill these values and skills in their children were in many ways a hybrid of ideas from their COOs and from the U.S., that went beyond simply mixing ideas from both places.

The mothers in this study, in many ways really created a new social framework for parenting that included independently raising their children in a new culture while drawing on familial support and cultural values from their COOs. In contrast to

immigrant mothers just a couple decades ago, the advent of advanced telecommunications, including cellular telephones, email, web chatting, web cams, and Skype, made it possible for many of the mothers in this study to be in regular contact with their parents, and receive real time advice from their parents, despite being geographically separated. Consequently, these mothers were potentially grappling with conflicts of cultural advice and ideas from two different cultures on a weekly and sometimes daily basis.

In addition, with historical cultural shifts that some of these mothers' COOs were facing in terms of views on women and children, some of these conflicts of ideas were potentially due to historical and generational differences regarding child rearing. Of course, contemporary, native-born American mothers living in the U.S. also regularly receive advice from their parents on child rearing, which sometimes conflicts with "expert" advice. However, these conflicts are usually solely due to generational and historical differences. It may be that the negotiation of both generational as well as cultural differences in child rearing ideas together is what creates this new social framework of parenting among immigrant mothers.

These findings bring up a couple questions: Where do parenting ideas and practices fit into Berry's acculturation strategies framework? Are they part of parents' cultural identities? If so, does this mean parents who utilize parenting ideas and practices influenced by the U.S. are more or less integrated or assimilated? The data from this study cannot provide an absolute answer to these questions, but it does add to Berry's acculturation framework in that it discusses how this *process* unfolds for parents, and the nuances of negotiating one's cultural identity as a mother who is an immigrant in the U.S.

In addition to Berry's acculturation framework the model in Figure 3 reflected ideas based on the work of Harkness and Super (1996) in relation to parental ethnotheories. Previous research on the development of parental ethnotheories, which are "individually constructed and culturally shared," (Harkness, Super, Keefer, Raghavan, & Campbell, 1996, p. 289) generally focused on how these cultural beliefs related to parenting unfold in a single culture among parents of the same cultural background, and how this compares across cultures (Harkness & Super, 1996). For the immigrant mothers in this study their parental ethnotheories developed as they navigated and parented in different cultures than the cultures in which they were raised. Limited research focused on parental ethnotheories has considered how these beliefs develop in a new cultural space that is apart from both the culture of origin and the new host culture. The majority of research on parental ethnotheories was cross-cultural, and focused on parents' beliefs, how they are shaped by the culture, and how these influence parenting practices, and ultimately children's development. This study, reflecting aspects of acculturation theory in terms of the coming together of two cultural belief systems, provided insight into what the development of parental ethnotheories might look like for immigrant parents who are drawing on two sets of cultural beliefs about parenting.

Finally, with an important consideration of context and how it shapes mothers' parenting practices and experiences, the findings from this study reflected aspects of ecocultural theory. This theory has been used to focus on low-income parents' experiences but it has not been specifically used to understand the experiences of low-income, immigrant mothers. This theory may be even more helpful for understanding immigrant mothers' experiences because of the focus on context and culture. In

particular, these mothers came to the U.S. with different cultural beliefs regarding children and families, shaped by an entirely different cultural context than the U.S. Consequently, the new cultural ideas and practices related to parenting that mothers created in the U.S. were influenced by the beliefs and values mothers took with them from their COOs,--and continued to develop as they maintained contact with their families of procreation after immigration-- and the context of the U.S.

The contexts of these mothers' lives were extremely important to the instantiation or implementation of the parenting ideas and practices they developed based on their COOs and U.S. beliefs. Specifically, mothers had certain ideas about how they wanted to raise their children but given the contextual constraints of the U.S. they were unable to carry out some of the practices they believed to be extremely important. For example, many mothers noted the importance of spending time with various family members on daily and weekly bases, but because their families were still in their COOs this was not possible. Alternatively, some mothers mentioned overemphasizing aspects of their cultures or certain parenting practices since they were not in their COO and these beliefs would not be supported by others in their everyday environment. For example, a mother described being more Egyptian here or acting more Muslim here than she would in her COO since her culture was not being reinforced by others outside of her household as it would be in Egypt. As a result, these mothers' parenting was something different than simply a combination of ideas and practices from the U.S.—it was a creation of something new.

In addition to constraints, the environment in the U.S. sometimes acted as a facilitator of mothers' instantiation of their parenting ideas, including their ideas

regarding discipline, education, and teaching their native tongues to their children. Mothers felt as though they had a lot of access to parenting information, as well as information on the U.S. school system and knowledge of specific language schools for their children. The findings from this study indicate that these immigrant mothers' parenting practices and experiences in the U.S. were the result of both cultural *and* contextual factors, and are reflected in families' daily routines. In sum, the findings from this study add to and reflect aspects of Berry's (2006) acculturation framework, parental ethnotheories, and ecocultural theory, to explain immigrant mothers' experiences negotiating parenthood in the U.S.

Methodological Contributions

Some of the contributions of this study relate to the methods utilized. Specifically qualitative methods are uniquely suited to provide information for understanding social phenomena that other methods cannot. This includes: development of conceptual frameworks by focusing on context, process, and meaning; uncovering emotional content; providing a retrospective perspective; and, uncovering heterogeneity of experiences.

The development of conceptual frameworks to understand social issues is a contribution distinct to using qualitative methods. Specifically, the goals of ethnographic methods are not to prove causation, generalize or identify factors associated with specific outcomes. Rather, using rich description, these methods intend to help provide insight into processes that underlie social phenomena by understanding the specific contexts and meanings that motivate certain behaviors. In this study the processes that emerged captured a specific group of mothers' immigration stories, as well as the development of

their parenting ideas and practices in the U.S, and their navigation of the ECCE system. These processes vividly illustrated these immigrant mothers' experiences and all that contributed to their lives, which may not have been captured by other methods. For example, many mothers initially indicated "economic opportunities" as their reasons for coming to the U.S. However as mothers told their stories about migrating, it became clear that for many their immigration to the U.S. was contingent on their families'. This information would not have been captured by survey research.

This study examined the context of immigrant mothers' daily lives to understand their experiences as mothers in the U.S. Specifically observations helped uncover aspects of parents' daily routines as well as their interactions with their children's ECCE programs. Interviews helped reveal not only what mothers did for their children and families but *how* mothers accomplished raising their children in a new country. Talking with mothers especially helped illustrate mothers' motivations for certain actions as well as struggles they faced. For example, when Aster lived without heat for nearly three weeks, this was not because she did not want to receive financial assistance but rather she did not know who to turn to since her previous experiences with social services were negative. Moreover, the methods of this study made it possible to understand how mothers made meaning of or thought about their lives in their COOs and in the U.S. In particular, using in-depth interviews showed how these women thought about and experienced being mothers in the U.S.

In addition to focusing on context, process, and meaning, using observations coupled with in-depth interviews this study captured the emotional experiences of mothers that might otherwise be hidden. In this study participant observations in

classrooms not only helped with learning more about the children, and understanding parents' interactions with their children's ECCE programs, but it also created a space in which rapport could be built with the parents. This rapport most likely contributed to how much parents disclosed during interviews. Rather than using a survey to simply learn the demographic information regarding mothers' immigration to the U.S., rich descriptions of these stories were gathered, some of which were extremely emotional experiences for mothers including fear, sadness, loss, and relief. During these stories mothers often shared, without being prompted, information regarding their documentation status, which could not have been gathered through a survey.

Mothers provided detailed descriptions of their immigration experiences, finding an ECCE program for their children, and their negotiations of their parenting ideas and practices in the U.S. These descriptions were retrospective providing unique accounts of how mothers' lives changed over time. Gathering this information using other methods may not have captured the meta-cognition or perspectives mothers gained on their lives, or their ideas about decisions they made or experiences they had. If these data were collected prospectively, particularly in relation to selecting ECCE mothers may have been less likely to admit having their children in low quality ECCE settings. However, as mothers looked back on their children's experiences, particularly now that they were in high-quality programs, they were able to really examine and share about some fairly negative ECCE experiences their children endured. This would be complicated to capture in a prospective interview as it would be difficult for mothers to admit having their children in a low-quality ECCE program.

Finally, qualitative methods are not meant to necessarily find the “common experience” but rather to illustrate the heterogeneity of human experiences. These methods uncovered common themes in experiences as well as revealed all the dynamic variations in these experiences. Qualitative methods often help us understand more about the outliers and give space for these participants’ voices to be heard, often challenging stereotypes. For example, according to survey data many poor immigrant mothers in the U.S. are uneducated (Hernandez, 2009). However this study provided insight into some of the experiences of poor immigrant mothers who were pursuing education and careers when they left their COOs. Even though they are not common or in the majority recognizing these mothers’ experiences was important, as they contributed to a complete understanding low-income immigrant mothers’ experiences.

Implications for Practice and Policy

There are a few implications for practice and policy that stem from this research. First and foremost this research implies the importance of access to ECCE for immigrant families. Previous research indicates the significance of high-quality ECCE for immigrant children (Magnuson, Lahaie, & Waldfogel, 2006), but this study points to the importance of ECCE for parents. Consequently, ensuring adequate access to these high-quality programs is essential. A number of the mothers in this study indicated in their ECCE histories that both availability and affordability were challenges they faced to securing care at some point during their children’s earliest years.

All three of the field sites for this study, which were funded by either Head Start or the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF), indicated having waiting lists. Research shows that both Head Start and CCDF are consistently underfunded and unable to serve

all eligible families (Matthews & Ewen, 2006a). Consequently, funding for ECCE programs like Head Start and ECCE policies like the Child Care and Development Fund needs to not only continue but it needs to increase. This funding is important for all low-income families' access to high-quality ECCE, but it is especially critical for low-income immigrant families' access to these programs. The findings from this research indicate how much immigrant families really rely on these programs not only for child care support for employment, but also for developmental support for their children, and to build social capital important for parenting in the U.S. However, as some of these mothers experienced, these programs, regardless of families' eligibilities, are not always available.

In addition to affordability, high-quality programs need to be geographically accessible. Many immigrant mothers in this study did not drive, so transportation to these programs was a constant challenge—particularly for mothers at River Banks. Also, some mothers discussed knowing about certain ECCE programs because they were located in their neighborhood, and they saw their signs every day as they went about their daily routines. Finally, if high-quality ECCE programs are made geographically accessible they will draw on children and families who live in the same neighborhood. In turn, this will contribute to helping build community, as well as necessary social networks and connections for immigrant families.

The findings from this study indicated that parents relied fairly heavily on their social network and cultural communities to learn about ECCE programs. Consequently, it seems as though, in addition to continuing to use organizations to disseminate information, using immigrants' social networks to inform immigrant parents about not

only ECCE programs but also other programs and services would be effective. The trust and efficiency of sharing information that is inherent in social networks may be the most effective way to reach a lot of immigrant families with important information—particularly, hard to reach families who may not interact with U.S. institutions.

Mothers mentioned the importance of having access to parenting education as it helped them better understand effective discipline techniques, nutrition information and developmentally appropriate ways of interacting with their children. In addition mothers indicated that the information and support they received from their children’s ECCE programs regarding the transition to Kindergarten was extremely helpful and important. Given the importance of this information and education, it needs to be conveniently accessible for all immigrant parents regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in ECCE. Using immigrant social networks or community-based programs like health centers that work with immigrant families may be a way to impart this information. Also, ECCE programs could consider opening parenting education classes and support for Kindergarten registration to “friends and family” of families already enrolled in their centers. This would not only utilize immigrants’ social networks, and provide additional immigrant families with parenting and Kindergarten information, but it would also introduce new immigrants to the opportunities of ECCE.

Along with information and education regarding parenting, adult education including English, computer, and graduation equivalency diploma (GED) classes were utilized by many mothers in this study. Ensuring the funding and availability of these classes in predominantly immigrant communities is imperative as it provides mothers with opportunities to improve their skills and education. This knowledge shaped

parenting as well as mothers' economic opportunities. Once again, mobilizing immigrants' social networks to publicize programs like this would be important.

There are a few programmatic shifts that ECCE programs might consider as a result of these findings. First, providing wrap-around services in ECCE programs was something that would be particularly helpful for immigrant families. Generally, these were trusted programs, and so enabling parents to obtain information, connections, and support to navigate other government systems and programs would be effective.

Alternatively, adopting ideas related to the full service school or Harlem Children's Zone, and having a whole host of family- and child-services available as part of ECCE is something important to consider.

Second, friendships that developed within these ECCE programs were important to mothers in terms of social and emotional support. Consequently ECCE programs might consider ways to foster the development of these relationships. This could be done either informally by introducing parents to one another, which may be based on the children who play together or if the parents have something in common. Programs could also take a more formal approach to developing these relationships by creating something like a buddy system. As new families are brought into ECCE programs, existing families in the program could help welcome them by doing things as simple as greeting them on their first day, or things that are more involved like meeting socially outside of the ECCE program to answer any parent-related questions.

Third, given some of the emotional experiences and challenges mothers faced in their COOs as well as when they arrived in the U.S., and their trust of their children's ECCE programs it is important that these programs routinely offer mental health services

for parents. Immigrant parents tend to not utilize mental health supports. However it is possible that if these supports were culturally competent and as one teacher mentioned to me, “not labeled mental health or well-being services,” more parents would use these services.

Limitations of the Study

This study provides insight into the experiences of one group of Latina and African immigrant mothers’ experiences of parenthood in a specific cultural, historical and social context in the U.S. Despite the strengths of this research in terms of the quality of data collected, and the findings that emerged, there are limitations to this study that need to be addressed.

The selective nature of this sample, in terms of only including mothers who were already enrolled in a high-quality ECCE program, the families in this study were not representative of and do not allow for statistical generalizability to mothers outside of the study. However, Weiss (1994) argues that findings from convenience samples can be generalized to groups with “similar dynamics and constraints” as those in the original sample (p. 27). For example, the findings from this study may be generalized to low-income Latina and African immigrant mothers of young children living in large metropolitan areas.

Based upon Krefling’s (1999) idea of transferability, detailed descriptions of the participants, their experiences, and the research context, provide enough information for other researchers to determine the transferability of these mothers’ experiences to the experiences of other immigrant mothers from Africa and Latin America. I spent six to nine months in the field talking with and recruiting families, and conducted one to three

hour interviews with 41 mothers. Despite this, a longer period of time in the field, and in these women's lives, as well as multiple interviews would have yielded even richer and more transferable data.

A second limitation of this study was related to language. Due to resources and the varied languages (Amharic, Arabic, French, various tribal languages) spoken by mothers, all of the interviews with African parents were conducted in English rather than mothers' native tongues. Despite mothers being very conversational in English, there were certainly experiences and emotions that were difficult for them to share outside of their native tongue. For example, at the end of her interview Maisa mentioned apologetically to me that she wished she could share more in Arabic because English was not easy for her---despite being very conversational in English this interview was difficult for her in terms of language. This limitation is buffered by the fact that this study reveals important information regarding the experiences of immigrant families from Africa who are understudied. However future ethnographic research should utilize translators to increase the richness of data gathered.

A final limitation of this study is that only immigrant mothers who were already enrolled in a high-quality ECCE program were interviewed. To gain the most complete understanding of low-income Latina and African immigrant mothers' experiences with young children in the U.S. it would be important to include families who utilize informal care as well as families who do not utilize any outside ECCE at all.

Areas for Future Research

The findings from this study provide motivation for continued research in a few areas related to immigrant mothers' experiences negotiating parenthood in the U.S.

Specifically, the following areas need to be explored further using comprehensive methods to better understand the dynamics, processes, and experiences that influence immigrant families' experiences: mothers' immigration decisions contingent on their families, and what this means for well-being and acculturative stress for mothers; independence and responsibility among immigrant families; experiences of mothers using informal ECCE and mothers who are not using ECCE.

Mothers' immigration decisions. Mothers' decisions to migrate to the U.S. emerged as an important area for more research. Specifically, the mothers in this study indicated that their decisions to come to the U.S. were contingent on family members' needs. Previous research has considered how these decisions and experiences are shaped by men (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 1992). There is a need to explore further the gendered experiences of migration but also how these experiences are shaped by other family members. This study provides some insight into this but it would be important to consider this among other immigrant groups including families from other regions of the world as well as immigrants from higher socioeconomic backgrounds.

Coupled with understanding more about women's decisions to migrate being contingent on family, future research should examine how these decisions shape mothers' adjustment to the U.S. Specifically this research should focus on how these decisions to migrate contingent on family shape acculturative stress and mothers' well-being. A mixed or comprehensive methods design might be best for exploring this, as qualitative interview methods may be necessary to uncover mothers' reasons for migrating, and data on acculturative stress and well-being could be measured using specific quantitative measures.

Responsibility for children among immigrant families. Mothers indicated that the most challenging aspect of their adjustment to the U.S. was being solely responsible for the development and well-being of their children. In mothers' COOs it was common for families and communities to share the responsibilities for the rearing of children, which removed pressure from individual parents. As mothers began to raise their children in the U.S. without the support of their families and communities they began to feel a lot of anxiety related to time. With less family involvement and U.S. cultural messages regarding the intensity with which mothers should be involved with their children, mothers felt pressure to devote a lot of time to their children. This stress was even greater for immigrant mothers who were single, and carried the burden of responsibility for their children.

This adjustment of immigrants to the level of responsibility demanded of parents in the U.S. needs to be explored further. In particular it is important to consider within a quantitative design that rigorously examines how this pressure and stress on immigrant mothers may impact child outcomes, as well as mothers' mental health. Also, this is something that should be considered across immigrant groups, and in particular, if possible, this may be interesting to consider among immigrants from countries in which families and communities do not play a very large role in child rearing. Of course these immigrants are most likely from economically stable countries and circumstances so their experiences may be very different overall.

Experiences of mothers utilizing informal or parental care. This study sheds retrospective perspective on mothers' experiences using informal and parental care—specifically, the experiences of mothers in this study *prior* to enrolling their children in a

high-quality ECCE program. However it does not provide insight into the experiences of immigrant mothers who utilize informal and parental care when their children are of preschool age. Future qualitative work in this area of immigrant families should focus on these women's experiences, particularly in relation to adjusting to life as a mother in the U.S., and their experiences navigating U.S. society. In addition, it would be important to examine these mothers' decision-making processes regarding ECCE for their children. Examining this process will provide further insight into characteristics of care important to immigrant parents, barriers to care, as well as other factors that contribute to these mothers' selection of informal and parental care.

Future Directions

There are a few possibilities for analyses and studies that may be conducted next in relation to this project. All of the data collected for this project were not used in the present study analyses. In particular, daily routine and diary data as well as information on navigating the education, health care, and social welfare systems were gathered. Consequently, a future direction of this research is to analyze these aspects of the data. Also, additional projects including new data collection are planned. These include: following up with the 41 mothers regarding their transitions to Kindergarten; exploring the experiences of understudied immigrant groups in the U.S.; longitudinal, prospective ethnography including a focus on neighborhood and community.

Daily diaries were collected from the 41 mothers in this study. I plan to analyze these data quantitatively to understand more about the demands of these families' daily routines. Specifically, these analyses will shed light on low-income immigrant mothers' time use. This will provide even greater insight into immigrant mothers' experiences and

the stresses of daily life in the U.S. Moreover, given that some of the mothers in this study were employed and some were not, a comparison of these two groups might provide a better understanding of how employment shapes immigrant mothers' daily routines. Finally, in a new project focused on the transition to Kindergarten (see below) diary data will be gathered. In turn it would be interesting to use these two sets of diary data to understand how mothers' daily lives change, if at all, when their children enter formal schooling.

Data collected on immigrant mothers' navigation of the education, health care, and social welfare systems were not analyzed in the current set of analyses. These data will be examined in future analyses to understand how these immigrant mothers navigated other systems that are important to child and family life. Based on preliminary analyses the state variation in health care policy in DC and Virginia seemed to shape these immigrant families' experiences living in the U.S. In turn, this state variation will be explored further. Early analyses of data on the education system indicated the complexity of the charter school system in Washington, DC. Mothers' navigation of this system may be interesting to look at in contrast to mothers experiences with the public school system in Virginia. Finally, despite eligibility among all mothers, some mothers utilized child and family public assistance programs far more than other mothers did.

I intend to follow up with as many of the 41 mothers as possible to learn about their experiences of their children's transition into Kindergarten. Specifically, I would like to conduct a second round of interviews with these mothers regarding building relationships with their children's teachers, and how prepared they felt they were as a family for this transition. Also, I intend to recruit additional immigrant mothers for this

study—some whose children were in formal, center-based ECCE the year before Kindergarten, as well as mothers whose children were in informal care, and parental care the year before entering formal schooling. Understanding these experiences of immigrant families will help ECCE programs as well as elementary schools understand what programs and information provide the most support for parents and children as they transition into Kindergarten. In addition it will highlight how to best support families with varied ECCE experiences prior to entering Kindergarten.

This study focused on Latina and African mothers. Latinas and Asians are studied most frequently in the literature given that they are the two largest immigrant groups in the U.S. However it is important to continue to conduct research to understand the experiences of other immigrant groups, like Africans. These immigrant groups may only be a small percentage of the total immigrant population in the U.S., but in some areas of the country they are the predominant immigrant group. Consequently, it is necessary for communities and legislators in these particular areas to have a better understanding of these immigrant families' experiences. There may be similarities across immigrants from various countries and regions of origin, but there are certainly experiences that are unique to each immigrant group that need to be explored.

In a future study I intend to focus on other understudied immigrant groups including families who emigrated from various countries in the Middle East. In the U.S. families from the Middle East are still largely misunderstood. This lack of understanding has led to stereotypes as well as potentially less effective services. Greater knowledge of these families and their experiences is important to not only quell negative stereotypes

but to also ensure these families, who now reside in the U.S., are able to effectively participate and raise their children in U.S. society.

Finally, a long term goal that emerged from this study is to conduct a longitudinal ethnography to learn even more about the daily lives of immigrant families with young children as they interact with U.S. child-and family-related systems over time. This project would be conducted as a team including researchers from the fields of early childhood education, child development, and sociology, who are focused on immigrant families and immigration. Specifically, this future study would use comprehensive methods to understand the lived experiences of understudied immigrant groups including low-income African and Middle Eastern families living in Maryland and Northern Virginia.

Families giving birth to their first children in the U.S. will be recruited to participate, and ideally will be followed until their children finish their first year of Kindergarten. This study will have both an ethnographic component as well as quantitative component to consider both parents' and children's development as well as experiences over time. Consequently, a longer amount of time will be spent in the field—five to six years—with multiple interviews, observations, and measures being conducted each year. Data collection will be focused on immigrant parents' transition to parenthood in a new host society. Specifically, in relation to parents this study would focus on their navigation of various systems, utilization of ECCE, as well as the development of a new space for parenting based on ideas and practices from the U.S. and their COOs. In relation to children this study will focus on their cognitive, linguistic, and socio-emotional development over time and in interaction with the ECCE system.

Conclusion

The parenting experiences of the immigrant mothers' in this study were varied and complex. Their immigration stories were comprised of three interrelated processes (decision to migrate, journey from COO, and adjustment to new host society), which contributed to their expectations of parenting in the U.S. Mothers' decisions to migrate to the U.S. were contingent on familial needs, and for many mothers from Latin America, these journeys were emotionally and physically exhausting.

For many mothers in this study adjusting to a new society felt most challenging when they began to raise children in the U.S. Their ideas and practice related to rearing their children in the U.S. were influenced by beliefs, values, and practices in their COOs and in the U.S. However, rather than simply melding together two sets of ideas and practices mothers really created a new social framework of parenting. These mothers were committed to instilling values and beliefs in their children that reflected influences from their COOs, and they wanted their children to learn certain skills, independence and communication, which were more reflective U.S. ideas. However the mothers in this study intended to use parenting practices and strategies that they learned in the U.S., which did not include corporal punishment and focused on open communication.

These mothers were also faced with learning how to navigate the ECCE system as they adjusted to parenting in the U.S. From these data emerged a model that reflected the processes that immigrant mothers experienced as they utilized the ECCE system. In particular, this process model captured the reasons that mothers sought care, mothers' desired characteristics of ECCE, connections they used to find various ECCE options, obstacles they faced, their experiences with programs and providers, as well as the social

capital they gained from these programs. Some aspects of this model are particularly important to consider in relation to immigrant families including: mental health as being a reason to look for ECCE; diversity and language as important aspects of ECCE; using a variety of connections to ECCE; accessibility of ECCE programs for immigrant communities; and social capital gains as a social function of ECCE for immigrant families. The ECCE programs in this study performed a social function for immigrant mothers. Specifically, they facilitated the creation of social relationships among mothers, and provided mothers with informational, material and physical supports.

Overall the findings from this study will help researchers, practitioners, and legislators understand the unique experiences of immigrant mothers as they adjust to life in the U.S. This information will contribute to creating the most effective and meaningful programs and policies for immigrant mothers and their children.

Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Informed Consent (English)

CONSENT FORM

| | |
|---|--|
| Project Title | Acculturation Experiences of Immigrant Parents with Young Children in Early Childhood Education Settings: A Qualitative Exploration |
| Why is this research being done? | This is a research project being conducted by Colleen Vesely, M.A. and Kevin Roy, Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, College Park. We are inviting you to participate in this research project because you are a parent of a young child in an accredited early childhood education program, who is originally from a country other than the U.S. and we would like to know more about your experiences of being a parent in the United States. The purpose of this research project is to learn more about immigrant's experiences of parenting related to their children's early childhood education program. |
| What will I be asked to do? | The procedures involve a 1-2 hour visit. First we will discuss the research with you, and if you choose to participate we will have you sign the consent form, then we will conduct a tape-recorded interview about your experiences as a parent, which will last about 1-2 hours. During this interview I will ask you about basic information regarding you and your family, you and your children's daily routines, your experience migrating to the U.S., your experiences with your children's early childhood education program, your experiences growing up, your ideas about what is most important for your children's development, as well as your goals for you and your families' futures. |
| What about confidentiality? | We will do our best to keep your personal information confidential. To help protect your confidentiality, you will be assigned an ID number. All data, including the recording of your interview will be kept on a password-protected computer, with access only to the primary researcher, student researcher, and a research assistant. Select undergraduate research assistants in the Family Science department at the University of Maryland will have access to the interview data files. These student researchers will be assisting with language and cultural translation throughout the study. At the end of the study interview recordings will be stored on a password protected computer. If we write a report or article about this research |

project, your identity will be protected to the maximum extent possible. Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if we are required to do so by law. In accordance with legal requirements and/or professional standards, we will disclose to the appropriate individuals and/or authorities information that comes to our attention concerning child abuse or neglect or potential harm to you or others.

This research project involves making audiotapes of you.

- I agree to audiotaped during my participation in this study.
- I do not agree to be audiotaped during my participation in this study.

What are the risks of this research?

Some of the questions have the potential to bring up topics that you may not want to discuss or that may be emotional for you. If this occurs we will stop the interview. In addition throughout the interview please feel free to refuse to answer any questions that you would not like to discuss.

What are the benefits of this research?

This research is not designed to help you personally, but the results will help us learn more about how immigrant parents of young children experience parenting and interacting with their children's early childhood education program in the U.S. We hope that, in the future, other people might benefit from this study through improved understanding of immigrant parents' experiences.

Do I have to be in this research? May I stop participating at any time?

Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify.

Is any medical treatment available if I am injured?

The University of Maryland does not provide any medical, hospitalization or other insurance for participants in this research study, nor will the University of Maryland provide any medical treatment or compensation for any injury sustained as a result of participation in this research study, except as required by law.

What if I have questions?

This research is being conducted by Kevin Roy, Ph.D. and Colleen Vesely, M.A. at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Colleen Vesely at: (978) 853-8084

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or

wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:
**Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland,
College Park, Maryland, 20742;**
(e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678

This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.

**Statement of Age
of Subject and
Consent**

Your signature indicates that:

- you are at least 18 years of age,;
- the research has been explained to you;
- your questions have been fully answered; and
- you freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.

**Signature and
Date**

NAME OF SUBJECT

SIGNATURE OF SUBJECT

DATE

Appendix B: Interview Informed Consent Form (Spanish)

FORMA DE CONSENTIMIENTO

| | |
|---|---|
| Título del proyecto | Experiencias de Aculturación de Padres Inmigrantes con Niños Pequeños en un Sitio Para la Educación Infantil: Una Exploración Cualitativa |
| ¿Por qué se esta llevando a cabo esta investigación? | Este es un proyecto de investigación que esta siendo conducido por Colleen Vesely, M.A. y Kevin Roy, Ph.D. en la Universidad de Maryland, College Park. Los estamos invitando para que participen en este proyecto de investigación porque usted es padre/madre de un/a niño/a en un programa acreditado de educación para la infancia, que es procedente de un país fuera de los Estados Unidos, y nos gustaría saber acerca de sus experiencias de ser padre/madre en los Estado Unidos. El propósito de este proyecto de investigación es para aprender más acerca de las experiencias de inmigrantes con respecto al cuidado de sus niños en programas para la educación infantil. |
| ¿Qué me dirán que haga? | Los procedimientos involucran una visita de 1-2 horas. Primero vamos a hablar acerca del proyecto con usted, y si decide participar le daremos una forma de consentimiento, luego le conduciremos una entrevista que será grabada acerca de sus experiencias como padre/madre, que durará aproximadamente 1-2 horas. Durante la entrevista le preguntaré información básica sobre usted y su familia, la rutina diaria de sus hijos, su experiencia inmigrando a los Estados Unidos, sus experiencias con el programa para la educación infantil de sus hijos, sus experiencias de su infancia, sus ideas acerca de que es lo más importante para el desarrollo de sus hijos, también como sus metas para su futuro y el de su familia. |
| ¿Qué acerca de la confidencialidad? | Vamos a hacer lo mejor posible para mantener su información confidencial. Para ayudarle a proteger sus confidencialidad, se le asignará un numero de identificación (ID). Todos los datos, incluyendo la grabación de su entrevista y la información de su familia será guardada en una computadora con contraseña, con acceso primario solo del investigador, estudiante investigador, y un asistente investigar. Un grupo seleccionado de estudiantes universitarios en el departamento de Estudios Familiares en la Universidad de Maryland tendrán acceso a los archivos de los datos de las entrevistas. Estos estudiantes investigadores asistirán con la lengua y la traducción cultural através del estudio. Al final del estudio, las grabaciones de las entrevistas serán guardadas en una computadora con contraseña. Si escribimos un reporte o articulo sobre este |

proyecto de investigación, su identidad será protegida la mejor manera posible. Su información podrá ser compartida con representantes de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park o autoridades gubernamentales si usted o alguien más está en peligro o si la ley lo requiere. De acuerdo con requisitos legales y/o estándares profesionales, revelaremos a los individuos o personas apropiadas la información que venga a nuestra atención concerniente a abuso de niños o negligencia o daño potencial para usted u otros.

Este proyecto de investigación implica la realización de cintas de audio suyas.

___ Acepto ser grabado durante mi participación en este estudio

___ No Acepto ser grabado durante mi participación en este estudio

Título del Proyecto

Experiencias de Aculturación de Padres Inmigrantes con Niños Pequeños en un Sitio Para la Educación Infantil: Una Exploración Cualitativa

¿Cuáles son los riesgos de esta investigación?

Algunas de las preguntas tienen el potencial de sacar temas que usted no quiera hablar o pueden ser emocionales para usted. Si esto ocurre pararemos la entrevista. Además a través de la entrevista por favor siéntase libre de reusar contestar alguna pregunta que usted no quiera discutir.

¿Cuáles son los beneficios de esta investigación?

Esta investigación no ha sido designada para ayudarle personalmente, pero los resultados nos ayudaran a aprender más acerca de cómo las experiencias de padres inmigrantes acerca del cuidado de niños pequeños y la in la interacción con el programa de educación infantil de su niño/a en los Estados Unidos. Esperamos que en el futuro, otras personas puedan ser beneficiadas por medio del entendimiento de las experiencias de padres inmigrantes.

**¿Tengo que estar en esta investigación?
¿Puedo dejar de participar en cualquier momento?**

Su participación en esta investigación es completamente voluntaria. Usted podría decidir no participar en lo absoluto. Si decide participar en esta investigación, usted puede dejar de participar en cualquier momento. Si decide no participar en el estudio o si deja de participar en cualquier momento, no será penalizado ni perderá ningún beneficio para los que califica de otra forma.

¿Hay alguna tratamiento medico en caso de una lesión?

La Universidad de Maryland no provee ningún seguro medico, de hospital o de otro tipo para los participantes en este estudio de investigación, tampoco la Universidad de Maryland proveerá ninguna compensación por algún tratamiento medico por alguna lesión mantenida como resultado de su participación en este proyecto de investigación, excepto como

¿Qué si tengo preguntas?

lo requiere la ley.

Esta investigación esta siendo conducida por Kevin Roy, Ph.D. y Colleen Vesely, MA en la Universidad de Maryland, College Park. Si tiene alguna pregunta con respecto al estudio de investigación en si, por favor contacte a Colleen Vesely al teléfono (978)853-8084

Si tiene alguna pregunta con respecto a sus derechos como sujeto de investigación y desea reportar una lesion relacionada con la investigación, por favor contacte a: **Institutional Review Board Office, Universidad de Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742;**

(e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telefono) 301-405-0678

Esta investigación ha sido revisada de acuerdo a los procedimientos de IRB de la Universidad de Maryland, College Park para investigaciones que involucran sujetos humanos.

Declaración de edad del sujeto y consentimiento.

Su firma indica que:

- Tiene por los menos 18 años de edad.
- La investigación le fue explicada
- Sus preguntas han sido completamente contestadas
- Usted libre y voluntariamente eligió participar en este proyecto de investigación.

Firma y Fecha

NOMBRE DEL SUJETO:

FIRMA DEL SUJETO:

FECHA

Appendix C: Interview Protocol

| Interview Topic | Questions |
|--|---|
| Basic demographics and background information | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How old are you? • How many children do you have? How old are they? • How many children are living in the U.S. with you? • Who is living in your household? • Are you married? |
| Immigration history | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is it that you came to VA/DC? • Tell me about coming to the United States? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ From where did you migrate? ○ What made you come to the U.S.? ○ What was the journey like? ○ Did you leave family or friends? ○ Did you join family or friends in the U.S.? • In general, how is life different here, versus [country of origin]? [probe: family life/routines, children’s routines, work, school, home life] (Yoshikawa, Chaudry, Rivera, & Torres, 2007) |
| ECCE history and selection | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about other child care you utilized prior to beginning at the Center. How did they find out about this child care. Gather a child care history from the time the child was born to now. What type of care was it? Why the mother chose this care? How they found out about this care? • Are you currently or did you ever use child care subsidies? If so, how did you find out about these? Whom did you pay with these subsidies? • Tell me about how you decided to enroll your child in ECCE, and specifically this program. How did you find out about this program? • Were there any challenges or obstacles to enrolling your child in the Center? • How old was your child when they first came to the program? • What were some of the important things you were looking for in ECCE when you enrolled child in [center]? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • Overall how would you describe your experiences with this program? • In what ways has this program helped you and your family? • Are there any things you would change or add to the program to make it better? • Are you friends with or do you spend time with other parents from your child’s ECCE program? |

| | |
|--|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other than the center is your child in any other care throughout the week? |
| <p>Ideas about parenting</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me what it means to be a good parent in the U.S. • What does it mean to be a good parent in your country of origin (COO)? • What has been the most challenging aspect of being a parent in the U.S.? • How is it different raising your child here rather than in COO? What things are better here? What things are better in COO? • How do parents raise children differently here in the U.S. compared to parents in [COO]? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • How does your child’s ECCE program support your parenting? • From whom have you received parenting advice? Family, friends, school? • Are there things you don’t do here as a parent that are OK for people to do in COO? Are there things that you do here that aren’t okay to do in COO? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • Are you glad your children are being raised here or do you wish you were raising them in your country of origin? |
| <p>Education experiences, beliefs, and social capital</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What did your parent(s) tell you about school and education as you were growing up? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • What was school like for you in your country of origin? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • How are schools different here in the U.S.? • Do you have some ideas about where the best schools are here? [probe, e.g., best in the city; best near the city] What makes them good schools? What about ones that aren’t so good – where are they? What makes them not so good? (Yoshikawa et al) • How much school do you think people need in COO to get a good job? What about here in VA/DC? [make sure to probe what she means by a “good job”; this may need probing as to how a good job is different in COO vs. U.S.] (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • Tell me about your hopes and dreams for your children in terms of education. • Tell me about the kinds of things you do to make sure your child achieves these dreams? • Do you think these ideas or strategies for helping your child achieve these educational goals have changed since you arrived in the U.S. and since your child began at the program? If so, how? |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is your child’s ECCE program helping you meet these goals? • Who else do you rely on to help your children in school? Family? Friends? Religious institutions? • What do you think is most important for you to do to help your child succeed in school? • What has been most challenging in relation to your children’s education? |
| <p>Financial stability: experiences and beliefs</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was it like trying to make ends meet / manage financially / manage expenses in [COO]? [if example are needed: keeping up with bills; medical expenses; education expenses; food, housing expenses] (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • What is it like trying to make ends meet here? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • How has your financial situation changed since you arrived in the U.S.? • What about families you know who’ve done well financially – how do you think they’ve done it? • What are your hopes for your families’ economic situation? What strategies are you using to achieve these goals? Are you employed? What plans do you have to be employed or for a career? • How do you think being poor / not having money in [country of origin, COO] is different from being poor / not having money in the U.S.? [probe <i>what people lack when they’re poor in COO vs. in US</i>] (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • How do people do well in COO? What keeps people from doing well in COO? How would you changes things in your COO if you could? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • How do people do well in the U.S.? What keeps people from doing well in the U.S.? How would you change things in the U.S., particularly for immigrants, if you could? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) |
| <p>Financial stability: social capital, government support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kinds of financial support have you received from family and friends? • What kind of support have you received from your child’s ECCE program? • Tell me about a time you either considered or did receive support from the U.S. government. How did you learn about these government/ program supports? • What kinds of help do you know of that are available for families, from programs or agencies, to help make ends meet? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • What about [*program]? [<i>Probe here for programs they</i> |

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|------------------------------------|---|
| | <p><i>haven't mentioned yet, from the following list, and get some information as above]</i> (Yoshikawa et al., 2007)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Child Care subsidies * Food Stamps * WIC (“food, formula, and nutrition help for pregnant women and babies”), * Health insurance (“Medicaid, Child Health Plus, Family Health Plus”) * EITC (“tax check”, “where you get money back at tax time”), * Child care assistance (“ACS – Administration for Children’s Services”, “HRA – Human Resources Administration”, “daycare”, Head Start, Early Head Start, -- or other), * Public assistance (“TANF”, “welfare”, “where the government mails you a check every month”), * SSI (“disability”, “monthly check when you or someone in your family is sick or can’t work because of some health condition”), * Unemployment insurance (“unemployment”, “money to help you out if you’ve lost your job while you’re looking for a new one”) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do people you know think about getting help from the government? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • How do you think the US government compares to COO in how they help families? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) • What about community groups and organizations? How do those in your neighborhood compare to those in COO in terms of supporting families? (Yoshikawa et al., 2007) |
| <p>Social support</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From whom do you receive emotional support? • Who can you count on (in an emergency) if you need help with the children? • Who are the friends or family members that you spend time with regularly? What kinds of activities do you do with them? |
| <p>Culture and language</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How has learning English been for you? (Yoshikawa et al) • What languages would you like your children to speak at home? school? • In your opinion, what are the good/bad things about speaking two or more languages? (Yoshikawa et al) • What aspects of your culture do you hope your children maintain? • Why are these things important? How will you make sure of this? |
| <p>Daily routines</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can you walk me through your day yesterday, from the time you woke up to the time you went to bed? Why are these |

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| | <p>important activities? How is your daily routine different from what it would be in your home country? Is there anything you wish were different in your daily routine or your children's? Are there certain things you wish you could do with your child throughout the day? Are there certain things you wish you could do for yourself throughout the day? [Gather details on the parent's daily interactions with the child who is in ECCE, whether the parent is working, their interactions with the ECCE program as well as their family, friends, or other parents]. How are weekend days different?</p> |
| Looking towards the future | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you were able to look at your life and your child's life 15-20 years from now, what would you like to see? • What would your family look like? • What would your children be doing? • What would you be doing? • How would you know that you were successful as a parent? |
| Final thoughts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What advice would you give to other families migrating from your country to the U.S.? As they prepare for their journey and as they arrive and settle in the U.S.? |

Appendix D: Index of Mothers

| Pseudonym | Country of Origin | Age | # of Children | Focal Child | Years in U.S. | Field Site |
|---------------|-------------------|-----|---------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| 1. Aamina | Ethiopia | 27 | 1 | 1 st | 7 | River Banks |
| 2. Aisha | Ethiopia | 30 | 1 | 1 st | 2 | River Banks |
| 3. Alejandra | El Salvador | 26 | 2 | 2 nd | 5 | River Banks |
| 4. Amira | Eritrea | 28 | 2 | 2 nd | 8 | River Banks |
| 5. Aster | Ethiopia | 40 | 3 | 3 rd | 18 | River Banks |
| 6. Baduwa | Ghana | 34 | 2 | 2 nd | 8 | River Banks |
| 7. Berta | Ethiopia | 45 | 1 | 1 st | 15 | River Banks |
| 8. Camila | Mexico | 26 | 2 | 1 st | 5 | Time of Wonder |
| 9. Daniela | El Salvador | 31 | 2 | 2 nd | 9 | La Casita |
| 10. Desta | Ethiopia | 40 | 3 | 2 nd | 10 | Time of Wonder |
| 11. Eliana | D. Republic | 32 | 2 | 1 st | 14 | La Casita |
| 12. Elsa | Mexico | 26 | 2 | 1 st | 7 | La Casita |
| 13. Emilia | Ecuador | 31 | 2 | 2 nd | 9 | River Banks |
| 14. Esmeralda | Mexico | 21 | 1 | 1 st | 5 | Time of Wonder |
| 15. Fernanda | El Salvador | 28 | 1 | 1 st | 10 | Time of Wonder |

| | | | | | | |
|---------------|-------------|----|---|-----------------|----|-------------------|
| 16. Guadalupe | El Salvador | 29 | 1 | 1 st | 5 | Time of Wonder |
| 17. Halima | Egypt | 35 | 4 | 4 th | 16 | River Banks |
| 18. Isabel | Mexico | 32 | 3 | 2 nd | 6 | Time of Wonder |
| 19. Juliana | Guatemala | 27 | 1 | 1 st | 7 | La Casita |
| 20. Kassa | Ethiopia | 30 | 4 | 4 th | 6 | River Banks |
| 21. Maisa | Sudan | 28 | 2 | 1 st | 6 | River Banks |
| 22. Makeda | Ethiopia | 23 | 1 | 1 st | 6 | River Banks |
| 23. Manal | Morocco | 29 | 3 | 1 st | 5 | River Banks |
| 24. Maria | El Salvador | 32 | 1 | 1 st | 6 | River Banks |
| 25. Marisa | El Salvador | 43 | 3 | 3 rd | 7 | La Casita |
| 26. Marisol | Guatemala | 32 | 1 | 1 st | 10 | River Banks |
| 27. Mercedes | El Salvador | 29 | 3 | 3 rd | 10 | Time of Wonder |
| 28. Paola | Mexico | 26 | 2 | 2 nd | 9 | La Casita |
| 29. Perla | Mexico | 46 | 2 | 1 st | 14 | La Casita |
| 30. Samira | Sudan | 32 | 2 | 1 st | 10 | River Banks |
| 31. Sana | Somalia | 42 | 4 | 4 th | 20 | River Banks |
| 32. Selena | El Salvador | 32 | 3 | 2 nd | 10 | River Banks |
| 33. Serwa | Ghana | 42 | 4 | 4 th | 9 | River Banks |
| 34. Sharon | Ghana | 32 | 3 | 1 st | 6 | River Banks |
| 35. Sisi | Ghana | 35 | 2 | 2 nd | 8 | River Banks |

| | | | | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------|------|-----------------|-----|-------------------|
| 36. Sofia | El Salvador | 24 | 2 | 1 st | 7 | Time of Wonder |
| 37. Stacey | Ghana | 35 | 3 | 1 st | 10 | River Banks |
| 38. Teresa | Argentina | 34 | 2 | 2 nd | 8 | River Banks |
| 39. Valeria | Mexico | 27 | 2 | 1 st | 7 | Time of Wonder |
| 40. Viviana | El Salvador | 37 | 4 | 4 th | 21 | Time of Wonder |
| 41. Yenee | Ethiopia | 37 | 1 | 1 st | 12 | River Banks |
| Average | | 32.1 | 2.19 | | 9.1 | |

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