

Chapter 1 | Introduction

AT THE CONCLUSION OF A DISCUSSION we ran with a group of nine Mexican mothers at a Head Start program on New York's Upper West Side, we asked if there was anything they wanted us to communicate to their children's teachers. One mother replied: "Ask them, 'Would it kill you to teach my child to write her name before she enters kindergarten?'" Later that day we interviewed the program's African American director:

TOBIN: In the focus groups here, many of the immigrant parents told us that they want more direct instruction and academic emphasis. Are you aware of this?

DIRECTOR: Yes, of course. We hear this all the time.

TOBIN: What would you say to the idea that you should change your approach to be closer to what the parents want?

DIRECTOR: "We shall not be moved."

This is a particularly stark and eloquent example of a pattern we found in the research we conducted in preschools in sites across the United States: immigrant parents and early childhood educators often have differing notions of what should happen in preschool.

For most young children of parents who have come to the United States from another country, preschool is the first and most profound context in which they come face to face with differences between the culture of home and the public culture of their new country. For parents who have recently immigrated to a new country, enrolling their child in a preschool program is the paradigmatic moment when the cultural values of their home and their adopted culture come into contact and, sometimes, conflict. And for

the United States and other countries with high rates of immigration, preschools are key sites for the creation of new citizens.

One in four children under age six in the United States has at least one immigrant parent and speaks a language other than English at home (Capps et al. 2005). In many school districts, a majority of students enrolled in public preschool programs are children of recent immigrants. And yet most preschool directors and teachers are given little guidance on how best to serve the immigrant children and families who come through their doors. In the absence of effective programs for bridging the worlds of home and school, new immigrant parents struggle to figure out what is expected of them, what role they can play in their child's preschool, if any, and how they might voice their wishes and concerns. And three- and four-year-old children are left with the task of being border crossers—moving back and forth each day between the often discordant cultural worlds of home and school.

With these issues in mind, we joined colleagues from England, France, Germany, and Italy to initiate the "Children Crossing Borders" research project. This research focused on the contrasting views of recent immigrants and the teachers who educate and care for their children on the means and ends of early childhood education. This book is a report on the U.S. portion of the larger study.

Our chosen method for this study was video-cued multi-sited ethnography (Tobin, Wu, and Davidson 1989). We made a videotape of a typical day in a preschool classroom that served four-year-old immigrant children and then used this video as a cue for focus group interviews with parents and teachers across varied settings—from small towns to large cities, and from communities with a long history of being immigrant gateways to communities in which immigration was a recent phenomenon. This study is the first to systematically compare the beliefs and perspectives of immigrant parents and the preschool practitioners who teach their children. It is also the first to employ a multi-sited ethnographic design to compare how parent and teacher perspectives on immigration play out in a variety of community contexts around the country: urban, suburban, and rural neighborhoods in and around Phoenix, Arizona; Nuevo Campo (the pseudonym we have given to a small town on the border of Arizona and Sonora, Mexico); an Iowa farming community we call "Riverdale"; urban and semi-urban neighborhoods in Nashville; and two neighborhoods in New York, one on the Upper West Side at a Head Start center, where most of the children come from Spanish-speaking homes, and the other in Harlem, where a church-based Head Start preschool serves a mixture of low-income African Americans and new immigrants from West

Africa and the West Indies. In chapter 2, we describe each of the research settings and explain how we carried out the research and the logic that informs our method.

THE INTERSECTION OF IMMIGRATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Debates about strategies for incorporating new immigrants into the fabric of American society and the role of preschools in this process have been going on for more than a century. Indeed, the origins of American early childhood education and care programs can be traced back in part to the urban settlement house preschools opened at the turn of the twentieth century to serve the children of recent immigrants from Europe. From its beginnings, early childhood education in the United States has been focused on providing children of recent immigrants with the kind of education and socialization that they need to become productive American citizens (Lissak 1983, 1989). Working from a deficit model, a central assumption of many of the first early childhood education programs in New York, Chicago, and other gateway cities was that recent immigrants are ill prepared to raise American children (Beatty 1997; Berg 2010; Fass 2006).

Rivka Lissak (1989) suggests that in that period there were two opposing paradigms for the early education of immigrants. Jane Addams espoused a respect for the cultural heritages of the families served in the Hull House nursery and sympathy with the immigrants' plight. In contrast, Robert A. Woods, the founder of the South End House in Boston, championed an approach that "considered 'new immigrants' a menace to the homogeneity, national solidarity, and inherent nature of the Anglo-American civilization," and therefore he advocated aggressively assimilationist strategies (Lissak 1989, 4–5). Lissak suggests that even in Addams's progressive, pro-immigrant approach there was a tension between respectfully supporting the maintenance of the values and practices of children's home cultures and creating a "cross-fertilization" (8) that would lead to a desirable withering of patterns of ethnic-cultural uniqueness and to a "harmonized-holist society" (13).

We cite this early twentieth-century history of immigration and early childhood education in the United States to emphasize that policy divides about how best to educate and socialize young immigrant children reflect deep, long-standing, unresolved tensions in American society. In the contemporary period, the goal of Americanization in early childhood education programs continues to coexist, in uneasy tension, with the goals of

maintaining cultural heritages and celebrating diversity (Arzubiaga, Noguérón, and Sullivan 2009; Lightfoot 2004; Souto-Manning 2007).

THE BATTLEGROUND ISSUES

Language

One of the most heated debates about immigration and early education concerns language policy. After decades of calls to develop bilingual education programs to help young children learn English while maintaining their heritage language and connection to their heritage culture, the pendulum has swung in the other direction, toward English-language immersion programs and an emphasis on preschools as sites to get children of recent immigrants and other young children defined as “at risk” off to a good start academically. The English-language-only policies passed first in California and then in Arizona and other states apply mostly to K-12 classrooms, but their impact on preschool programs has been felt in the greater pressure put on staff and parents to have children fluent in English before they enter kindergarten (Arzubiaga and Adair 2009). One result has been a decline in bilingual programs (Dyson 2003; Evans and Hornberger 2005; Fillmore 1991; Genishi and Goodwin 2008). In chapter 4, we explore immigrant parent and preschool teacher perspectives on English-language acquisition and home-language retention. One of our findings is that most preschool teachers reported having had little or no training in strategies for working with English-language-learning students, and they were largely unaware of the research literature showing the advantages of programs that support the maintenance and development of first-language abilities in young children (Lindholm-Leary and Borsato 2006; MacSwan and Pray 2005; Tse 2001).

Academics

The centrality of play has been long debated in early childhood education, with one side arguing for an emphasis on learning through play and the other for more systematically taught pre-academic skills. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, by emphasizing academic readiness and the testing of elementary school students, has had the effect of adding to the pressure on U.S. preschools to emphasize English-language acquisition and early reading instruction for recent immigrants, often at the expense of more play-based curricular approaches (Brown 2009; Kagan and Kauerz 2006; Stipek 2006). A consistent finding of our study is a split—as dramatized in the dialogue that opens this chapter—between the desire

of immigrant parents for more emphasis on academic preparation and the argument of their children's teachers that learning and social development should be integrated through a play-based curriculum. In chapter 3, we analyze these differences in the views of contemporary preschool teachers and immigrant parents on the balance of play and academic preparation.

Multiculturalism

Within progressive academic circles, the dominant discourse for working with the young children of recent immigrants is multiculturalism, but multiculturalism is a complex and contentious construct (Darling-Hammond 2007; Fusarelli 2004; Mitakidou et al. 2009). Multicultural education is challenged on one side by Afrocentric and anticolonialist critiques of the fantasy of the nation as a melting pot (Yosso 2002), and on the other side by conservative critiques of multiculturalism as a force that weakens academic standards, balkanizes society into identity groups, and promotes entitlement programs that favor foreign-born over native-born Americans (Horne 2007). In chapter 5, we examine immigrant parent and teacher perspectives on the role of the preschool in helping children develop a sense of citizenship and cultural identity. Most immigrant parents in our study told us they want their children to become "American" but also worry about their children being exposed to negative aspects of American society and losing religious and cultural values. Teachers, while expressing an appreciation for home cultures, often see immigrant parents' adherence to their religious and cultural beliefs as a sign of backwardness and as an obstacle to their children's successful assimilation. Although most of the teachers we interviewed expressed sympathy for the challenges facing the immigrant children they taught and their families, some of their comments reflect the contemporary anti-immigrant sentiments of their communities—and indeed of the country as a whole.

Parental Involvement in Children's Education

Lissak (1983) argues that while Jane Addams was viewed in her time as an advocate for immigrants, Hull House had an uneven record of empowering and being responsive to the wishes of stakeholders in the immigrant communities it served. Lissak draws a distinction between social service programs that give immigrant families what the program believes they need and programs that respond to their clients' wishes. Dory Lightfoot (2004, 100, emphasis in original) argues that this tension continues to characterize many preschool programs:

Despite efforts—which usually seem scrupulous and sincere—to respect parents' wishes and home cultures, programs are generally structured around the assumption that there is one best, or one so-called *normal* path for child development, and that some group of so-called *experts*, such as educational psychologists or program instructors, know better than participating parents how to make children follow this path.

Parental involvement is widely cited as crucial to the educational success of immigrant children (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005; Gonzalez-Mena 2001, 2008; Hayden, De Goia, and Hadley 2003), but exceedingly difficult to implement effectively (Doucet 2008, 2011a; Vandenbroeck 2009). In chapter 6, we present the perspectives of preschool staff and immigrant parents on what they see as the problems and possibilities in the relationship between schools and families, and we provide a report on our own not very successful attempt to implement a program aimed at giving immigrant parents greater say about what went on in their children's preschool.

KEY CONCEPTS, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this study, we have employed several innovative concepts—some original, some adapted from other researchers—to analyze central issues of immigration and early childhood education and to arrive at some implications and recommendations. Among those issues are the need to balance English retention and home-language retention, the (felt) urgency of academic preparation, immigrant children's hybrid identities, the role of bilingual/bicultural teachers, and the difficulties in communication between immigrant parents and their children's teachers. The concepts include: parental pragmatism; parents' and teachers' ecological decision-making; the intersectionality of immigration with race, class, and culture; and the false opposition of cultural responsiveness and best practice. We arrive at several implications: that more attention could be paid in teacher education programs to strategies for working with immigrant children and their families; that we need to reconceptualize our notions of best practice and quality in early childhood education to foreground responsiveness to the diversity of learners, communities, and contexts; that the role played by bilingual/bicultural staff could be better appreciated and supported; and that new models of teacher-parent communication could be developed.

Parental Pragmatism

The tendency of immigrant parents to be pragmatists in their decision-making about their children's early education leads them to choose the necessary over the ideal, based on their felt hierarchy of needs. All parents to some degree are pragmatic, but new immigrant parents are more so, owing to the greater constraints under which they must negotiate life for themselves and their children. The pragmatism of immigrant parents helps to explain, for example, our finding that while almost all of the immigrant parents we interviewed expressed the desire for their children to grow up retaining fluency in their home language, many favored an English-heavy approach over a bilingual one because this desire was trumped by the urgency they felt for their children to quickly acquire fluency in English. For non-immigrant middle-class parents, a bilingual program that gives their child a chance to learn some Spanish or Chinese as a second language is an interesting enrichment option. For new immigrant parents, the risks, on the one hand, of their child failing to become fluent in English before entering elementary school and, on the other, of their child never developing full oral fluency and the ability to read and write in their native language make the stakes of their decisionmaking about language much higher.

This logic also applies to multicultural education: immigrant parents said in our focus groups that passing their cultural and religious values on to their children was a high priority in their parenting, but that it was unrealistic to expect this to be a priority of their children's preschool. Similarly, while many immigrant parents told us that they appreciated the play-based curricular approaches espoused by their children's preschool teachers, their concern about their children being labeled as "behind" when they entered kindergarten led many of them to wish that their children's preschool gave higher priority to academic preparation.

Such pragmatic reasoning led many immigrant parents to conclude that the best solution was a separation of tasks and responsibilities, with the preschool teachers teaching their children English, getting them ready for life in the United States, and preparing them academically for the demands of elementary school, while parents took responsibility for home-language retention, cultural identity, and religious education. Many immigrant parents argued that their children's time in preschool was so precious that attention there needed to be placed on what teachers could give their children that they could not. Thus, as we discuss in chapter 6, many immigrant parents believed that, even if they disagreed with aspects of the preschool's approach, it was better to say nothing and

to adopt a deferential stance than to risk losing the goodwill of their children's teachers.

Ecological Decisionmaking

The nuanced positions taken by immigrant parents on questions of language and curriculum reflect not just a general pragmatism and sense of urgency but also a calculation of both the opportunities and the demands of their local setting, leading to what we call "ecological decisionmaking." Considering that new immigrant parents live, work, and send their children to school in highly diverse settings, it is not surprising that the parents in the different locales where we conducted focus groups expressed varying priorities and preferences. Historical gateway cities such as New York and Phoenix present immigrants with different resources and challenges than do cities such as Nashville and small towns such as Riverdale, Iowa, which have much less experience with immigration. Settings where immigrants live in enclaves—speaking their own language with most people they encounter and sharing a cultural background—present different opportunities, but also different challenges, than do settings where immigrants are in the minority in their neighborhoods and schools. These differences in the cultural and linguistic ecology of communities lead immigrants to come to different conclusions about how they want their children's preschool to approach questions of language, culture, academic preparation, and social inclusion.

Immigrant parents take stock not only of what their community and preschool can offer their children but also of their own strengths and weaknesses, as well as their own resources, when it comes to preparing their children for success in school and for life in the United States. Parents who speak limited English look to the preschool to give their children what they cannot give them. Immigrant parents who feel secure in their ability to provide their children with a strong sense of cultural identity and values and who feel confident about their ability to pass on their home language want the preschool to emphasize academic preparation. For these reasons, we suggest that it is necessary to shift the core research question in studies of immigration and education from "What do immigrants need and want from their children's schools?" to "What do immigrants from different backgrounds who settle in different communities that present different challenges and opportunities want and need from their schools?"

Because parents living in different communities want and need different things, we find that we cannot make sweeping conclusions about what immigrant parents expect from their children's preschools. In communi-

ties where there are many immigrants from the same cultural and language background, immigrant parents have different concerns about early childhood education than do parents in communities where they are among just a handful of immigrants from their culture. Immigrant parents living in communities that are new to immigration encounter different challenges than do parents living in communities with a long continuous experience of immigration. A parallel argument can be made for teachers, whose thinking about what is most important to teach immigrant children is driven not only by their pedagogical beliefs but also in part by their assessment of the educational and social resources of their community.

To say that immigrant parents tend to be pragmatic and to make decisions based on their assessment of barriers and resources is not to say that these calculations necessarily are correct. New immigrant parents are forced to make crucial decisions about their children's early education based on limited and, in many cases, flawed information (Crosnoe 2007). A lack of fluency in English limits immigrant parents' access to helpful sources of information in their attempts to evaluate risks, resources, and options. Much of the information guiding their decisionmaking is based on stories they have heard from other immigrant parents. They evaluate this information through the prism of their experiences with education in their home country, their folk theories of child-rearing, and the values of their culture of origin.

But to suggest that immigrant parents are inevitably guided by less than perfect information and that they make decisions that may be inconsistent with research findings and recommendations from panels of experts is not to suggest that their perspectives should be discounted or that their calculations are less reasonable or rational than those of their children's teachers or of policymakers, whose decisionmaking about early childhood education also is too often based on inadequate data, misinterpretation or ignorance of the research literature, or political and ideological factors. We need to avoid conceptualizing immigrant parents' perspectives as a form of ignorance while viewing the beliefs of teachers, policymakers, and experts as knowledge.

The Social Conservatism of Immigrant Parents

We can understand immigrant parents' perspectives on early childhood education as reflecting the intersectionality of their status as immigrants, their socioeconomic class, and their cultural, religious, and political beliefs. This suggestion is consistent with Hirokazu Yoshikawa's (2012) study of the child-rearing strategies of undocumented immigrant parents; like our study, Yoshikawa's research reveals the interaction of effects

caused by a lack of legal status, poverty, and prejudice, with effects that can be traced to parents' cultural beliefs and experiences back home prior to emigration.

A key finding of our study is that while immigrant parents have some concerns that are specific to being a new immigrant, many of their perspectives align closely with the views of socially conservative Americans. In our focus groups, white and black working-class parents as well as religious middle-class parents raised many of the same concerns raised by new immigrant parents about an emphasis on academic preparation in preschool, children showing respect for teachers and other adults, the acceptability of corporal punishment (Vernon-Feagans 1996), and the importance of protecting children from the hypersexuality of American society. An ironic implication is that some of the demographic groups in the United States most opposed to immigration and to legalizing the status of undocumented immigrants would find these new immigrants, as voters, on their side on many social issues (Fisher 2012). There are signs, however, that the political landscape is changing: some evangelical groups that are conservative on most social issues are beginning to embrace new immigrants as their potential political allies on abortion, gay marriage, and other wedge issues and recruiting them as co-congregants (Lee and Pachon 2007; Taylor, Gershon, and Pantoja 2012; Wong, Rim, and Perez 2008).

The majority of the most comprehensive universal prekindergarten programs in the United States are in the "red" states (NIEER 2011); in 2011 four of the five states with the highest percentage of four-year-olds enrolled in public preschools were Florida, Oklahoma, Georgia, and West Virginia. Although bipartisan support, especially in state legislatures, for increasing the provision of preschool is growing, this does not mean that there are not large ideological differences among supporters about the means and ends of preschool. Debates among scholars about the balance of academics and play in the preschool curriculum reflect in part a deeper ideological schism in American society (Lareau 2003) about fundamental issues: Is knowledge constructed or transmitted? What is the proper authority of teachers and other adults in children's lives? What role do schools play in promoting civic, moral, and religious values?

Immigrants play a complex role in these debates. New immigrants are often identified as one of the sectors of American society most in need of preschools to compensate for perceived parental inadequacies. The strongest advocates for increasing new immigrants' access to early childhood education and care programs and other services tend to be political and social progressives. But if and when their voices are heard, immigrants may become swing voters who side with the more conservative positions

on questions of preschool curriculum and pedagogy and other social issues.

The Intersections of Poverty, Prejudice, and Immigration

We were surprised by how much of the time in our focus group discussions was taken up by immigrant parents telling stories, not directly about preschool, but instead about the prejudice they encountered in the larger society and about their economic difficulties. These experiences of prejudicial treatment are rarer for newly arrived middle-class immigrants, suggesting that such prejudice has as much or more to do with social class as with country of origin or immigration status. For example, an immigrant father in a Phoenix focus group told about being treated badly when he stopped after work at a grocery store in a middle-class neighborhood; he ascribed this treatment as much to the fact that he wore dust-covered construction clothes as to his being Mexican and Spanish-speaking: "This time I go to Fry's where the American people go, and I see the difference. They look at me, so clean, and me so dirty, buying chicken. I feel they are staring at me."

A surprising finding is that the parents we interviewed at the preschool of the Phoenix Metro Islamic School, located in Tempe, reported few experiences with prejudice in the wider society. This may be the result in part of the immigration climate in Arizona, where Mexicans are the chief target of anti-immigrant rhetoric and treatment. Had we interviewed parents and teachers at an Islamic school in a community elsewhere in the country that was rife with anti-Muslim rhetoric, it is likely that we would have heard more stories of prejudice. This finding is consistent with the theory that in different communities different groups are the stigmatized "other"—the immigrant group on which anxieties and hostility are most easily projected (Balibar 2003).

In public preschool programs serving children of new immigrants, problems of prejudice and poverty are ever present but daunting for teachers to address. The mission of Head Start and some other public preschool programs is not only to get children off to a good start in life but also to help parents escape from poverty. We were therefore surprised to find that most of the teachers in our focus groups said nothing about their students' poverty or about the racism faced by the students and their families in the larger society. Even when practitioners showed an awareness of the impact of these larger social problems on the families of the children they taught and cared for, they said that they felt at a loss

when it came to doing anything about it. When faced with the enormity of these problems, a common response of teachers is to stick to their own area of expertise, which is providing high-quality care and education, and to leave social problems to social workers and social activists.

The Tension Between Cultural Responsiveness and Best Practices

Early childhood practitioners who work with immigrant children often find themselves caught between two core beliefs: on the one hand, they believe in being culturally sensitive and responsive to parents, and on the other, they want to remain faithful to their core professional codes of best practice. Most teachers and directors told us that they support the principle of making their school more welcoming to new immigrants by making accommodations for religious diets, using words from children's home languages in the morning greetings, adding culturally relevant books to the book corner, and celebrating a range of holidays. Most practitioners drew the line, however, at questions of curriculum and pedagogy and were unwilling to accommodate parents' wishes for a more academic approach in preschool. On these questions, they take the position that they "shall not be moved."

To put it another way, the willingness of early childhood educators in our study to be culturally responsive was trumped by their commitment to their notions of best practice, which were centered on the principles of constructivism, learning through play, and resisting a pushed-down academic curriculum. Across the sites in this study we found that preschool teachers were generally reluctant to change the way they relate to parents and to engage with parents in nonhierarchical forms of dialogue. We suggest that practitioners' reluctance to change comes primarily not from any belligerence or lack of concern or empathy, but rather from an understandable hesitation to have their professional practices challenged or compromised. This reluctance is not likely to change without a paradigm shift—that is, not until teachers come to see working collaboratively with parents in general and with immigrant parents in particular as being just as central to their job and their profession as teaching and caring for young children.

Unprepared to Work with New Immigrants

One of the most consistent of our findings across all of the settings is that teachers have had little or no training for the task of working with immi-

grant children or their parents. Few teachers are prepared to work with English-language learners (ELLs), and because most of them had had little exposure to research on second-language acquisition (Early and Winton 2001), there is widespread overreliance on folk theories such as the notion that learning two languages while still young leads to interlanguage confusion. Except for those who were themselves immigrants, most teachers are unaware of immigrant families' cultural beliefs and practices, contemporary living conditions, and perspectives on early childhood education.

Among the teachers we interviewed, we found a wide range of attitudes, beliefs, and levels of experience. A very few practitioners were openly hostile to immigrant children and families, but many more of the teachers we encountered thought of themselves as supportive and without prejudice toward immigrants; nevertheless, in our focus groups these teachers made statements that were naive, misinformed, unproductive, and potentially offensive. We found considerable variation across sites in teachers' ability to transcend stereotypical and naive views of immigrant children and families. For example, in New York and Phoenix, two urban areas with many immigrants and a long history of immigration, teachers were less likely to speak about immigrants in naive and stereotypical terms than the teachers in Nashville and the small rural town in Iowa, which both had only a recent history of cultural diversity and interaction with immigrants.

These teachers' lack of experience and rhetorical sophistication should not be taken, however, as an indication of a lack of sympathy or an inability to learn to treat immigrant children well or to engage in dialogue with immigrant parents. Beneath statements that suggested naïveté or even anti-immigrant beliefs and sentiments, we detected signs in these teachers of a desire to change and to connect with immigrant children and parents. And behind some of the more sophisticated and politically correct statements of teachers working in New York and Phoenix we sometimes heard sentiments that were less pro-immigrant and inclined to be helpful than they at first seemed.

A clear implication of these findings for policy is that we need pre-service and in-service teacher education programs that include systematic preparation in strategies for working with new immigrant children and their families (Daniel and Friedman 2005; Ray, Bowman, and Robbins 2006). Practitioners must also be given training for working with young English-language learners. Teacher education programs must help practitioners understand that being responsive to immigrant parents' concerns and beliefs, rather than constituting a threat to notions of best practice, is itself a form of best practice.

LISTENING TO THE VOICES OF IMMIGRANT PARENTS

Most preschool programs that serve children of immigrants are hampered by practitioners' and policymakers' lack of knowledge of and consideration for parental perspectives (Carreón, Drake, and Barton 2005; Chrispeels and Rivero 2001; De Gaetano 2007; Doucet 2011a; López 2009; Ramirez 2003; Riojas-Cortez 2001; Rueda and Monzó 2002; Souto-Manning and Swick 2006). The best practices and versions of normative child development that guide early childhood education and care policy are insufficiently informed by culture differences and laden with middle-class, majoritarian values and assumptions (Ballenger 1998; Delpit 1995; Goodwin 2002; Lightfoot 2004; Reese and Gallimore 2000; Vandenberg 2009). Immigrant parents' voices introduce perspectives on the social, emotional, cognitive, and academic dimensions of early childhood education that could broaden and challenge dominant notions of best practice (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005) and inform policy.

Our study shows that immigrant parents have much to say about what they would like for their children to experience in their preschool programs and much to contribute to discussions of preschool practice and policy. This in itself is an important finding of this study because historically, and to this day, the voices of parents—and particularly those of parents who are recent immigrants—have often been marginalized in debates within preschool programs about preschool policy and practice. We have found that immigrant parents, when given the opportunity to speak about their children's early education, are more often than not passionate, thoughtful, reasonable, and pragmatic.

On the other hand, our study also shows that there are steep barriers that make it difficult for immigrant parents to speak in schools and, when they do, to be heard by educators. These barriers include lack of fluency in a common language between immigrant parents and teachers; customs of deference to teachers and a hesitancy to cause offense or make trouble; and a lack of time, space, and mechanisms for immigrant parents to speak at their children's preschools.

BUILDING BRIDGES BETWEEN SCHOOLS, IMMIGRANT PARENTS, AND IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES

In the second stage of our study, we attempted to apply the lessons from the research stage to construct new models for teachers and immigrant

parents to engage in meaningful dialogue about the means and ends of early childhood education. We used the videos that had served as research tools in the first stage as conversation starters in gatherings we organized of immigrant parents and their children's teachers. While we had some moments of success with these pilot efforts, in most cases we failed. We worked for a year to introduce teachers to concepts such as parents' "Funds of Knowledge" (González, Moll, and Amanti 2005) but failed to significantly change teachers' view of parents as clients needing their instruction to a view of them as educational partners. By the same token, the year we spent trying to cultivate in parents a sense of being equal partners in their children's education, with a meaningful role to play in guiding the preschool's curriculum, mostly failed to shift parents away from their public stance of deference ("agachar") toward teachers.

These experiences have not made us less committed to the value of meaningful dialogue and power-sharing between teachers and immigrant parents, but they have made us more realistic about the hurdles. We find ourselves in agreement with Michel Vandebroek's (2009) recent argument that when dialogue is initiated between educators and immigrant communities, things are likely to get worse before they get better, as well as with Fabienne Doucet's (2011a) observation that there are costs as well as benefits to immigrant families of parental involvement in their children's schools. Elsewhere, Doucet (2011b) argues that efforts to build bridges between the worlds of the school and home are resisted by many immigrant parents who fear, not without reason, that such bridges make it possible not only to bring parent perspectives to the school but also to allow the school and the host society to reach further into the life of the family, undermining traditional values and exposing the family to scrutiny and potentially to legal and social service interventions. While pointing out its perils for immigrant families, Doucet acknowledges that bridging the worlds of home and school is worth the effort, if attention is paid to issues of power.

The Te Whariki national early childhood education framework of New Zealand is an example of a curriculum that foregrounds the perspectives of families and communities and calls for "giving effect to a Māori voice within services" (Ritchie and Rau 2008). Maoris, of course, are the indigenous people of New Zealand, not an immigrant group. Nevertheless, there are lessons here for the creation of effective models of immigrant parent participation in their children's education. The Maori case highlights the need to include in the provision of early childhood education services coursework for teachers on bilingualism and on working with students and families from diverse cultural backgrounds, as well as a

commitment to curriculum reform that includes the voices of respected members of the communities that schools serve.

Although cultural responsiveness has not historically been a hallmark of U.S. preschool programs serving children of recent immigrants, there are signs of progress. Over the past twenty years, the quality standards of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) have put more and more emphasis on the importance of preschools being culturally as well as developmentally appropriate. The newest Head Start performance standards (Office of Head Start 2009) stress the importance of preparing teachers to understand and be responsive to the needs of immigration families. A recent update to Head Start's *Multicultural Principles for Head Start Programs Serving Children Ages Birth to Five* (Office of Head Start 2008) calls for increasing attention to cultural diversity, developing sensitivity to the needs of English-language learners, and hiring staff who come from the community and cultures served by the program.

The goals and policies set out in these documents are exemplary, but the challenge is in the implementation. There are few data to show to what degree Head Start and other preschool programs are meeting the standards for culturally responsive curricula and nonhierarchical parental involvement. We fear that pressures on Head Start and other publicly funded preschool programs to show that students are meeting standardized assessments goals for English-language learning and academic readiness will work against the implementation of efforts to make preschool programs more culturally responsive. As a recent response by La Raza to the Race to the Top (2011) Early Learning Challenge Grant request for proposals points out:

Less than a handful of states make any reference to the needs of ELL students, leaving the vast majority of states with no articulated program strategies or policy recommendations to address the needs of ELLs in their state early learning guidelines. The lack of comprehensive early learning standards that address the diverse language and ethnic child populations is alarming. . . . The current QRIS [Quality Rating and Improvement System] systems have been developed with little attention paid to how programs address the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families.

It remains to be seen how calls by the Department of Education and others for uniform standards and assessments will be balanced with attention to the needs and perspectives of immigrant parents and communities.

THE ROLE OF BILINGUAL AND BICULTURAL STAFF

In our focus group interviews, both immigrant parents and non-immigrant teachers expressed appreciation for bicultural and bilingual staff members—from head teachers to family service coordinators, teacher's aides, and office workers—as sources of information, translators, and mediators. But comments in these interviews also suggested that neither immigrant parents nor non-immigrant teachers appreciated the difficulties faced by bicultural staff members as they struggle to negotiate their in-between position. Teachers who were themselves immigrants discussed both the role they play as cultural and language translators and mediators and the difficulties they encounter in situations where they feel pressured to speak either as the voice of their community or as the voice of the program. Both immigrant parents and non-immigrant school staff look to bicultural and bilingual staff members to provide a bridge between the worlds of home and school (Monzó and Rueda 2008), but both sides tend to underestimate the complexity of this task (Lucero 2010; Rueda, Monzó, and Higareda 2004).

In the course of becoming professionals, immigrant teachers have had to renounce positions they held before joining the field and to adopt its central beliefs—for example, beliefs in play, constructivism, and child-centeredness. On the other hand, immigrant teachers who adopt too completely the positions of their non-immigrant fellow teachers risk being seen as alienated from their culture of origin—or worse, as a traitor to their community.

One policy implication is that we need to recruit and retain more teachers who are recent immigrants. An unfortunate and unintended side effect of the requirement by Head Start and other public preschool programs that all teachers have a four-year college degree and assistant teachers a two-year degree is that many African American, Native American, and bilingual Hispanic teachers and aides lost their jobs in preschools and the profession changed its complexion, becoming more white, Anglo, and middle-class. Recruiting more people who are bilingual and bicultural into the field of early childhood education requires effort on several fronts: for instance, programs that allow teacher's aides and part-time staff to complete two-year and four-year certification programs while retaining their jobs must be created and funded, and community colleges and universities must ramp up their efforts to attract bilingual and bicultural candidates into early childhood education programs.

Another policy implication is that we must acknowledge the value of

bilingual and bicultural staff to pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, as well as the difficulties these staff members face in balancing their responsiveness to the school and to their community.

THE VALUE OF PRESCHOOL TO IMMIGRANT CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Our focus on areas of difference in the perspectives of immigrant parents and their children's teachers should not obscure the fact that the great majority of the immigrant parents in our study expressed appreciation for the opportunity to send their children to preschool. Critical comments made by parents were often introduced with such phrases as, "I really like the teachers here," or, "I am grateful my child is able to attend this school." Even if they wanted some adjustments made to the program, none of the parents told us that they did not value their child's preschool experience.

Our informants' general sense of appreciation for the value of their children's preschool experience is consistent with the research literature, all of which shows academic gains (McCartney 2004; Reynolds 2003) and long-term economic advantages (Masse and Barnett 2002; Nores et al. 2005; Schweinhart et al. 1993) for children who attend high-quality early childhood programs (Myers 2005). Studies show that prekindergarten programs are particularly beneficial for immigrant, English-language-learning children, especially when staff for these programs are bilingual and have some training in working with ELL students (Garcia 2007).

The policy implications here are complex. Many states have recently implemented versions of universal prekindergarten programs. But with funding for these programs limited, there are intense policy debates about whether all children under age five should be enrolled in them or whether they should be targeted at children seen as being at risk because they do not speak English, are poor, or have been identified as having special needs. In many states and localities, as at the national level, there are debates about the ratio of funds that go for prekindergarten programs versus all-day kindergarten; for programs for children in the year or two before they enter kindergarten versus programs for children from birth to age three; and for programs that focus more narrowly on children's academic and social development versus more comprehensive programs that include a focus on health, social services, and parental education (Fuller 2007; Tobin, Hsueh, and Karasawa 2009).

While our findings cannot resolve these tensions, they do allow us to present immigrant parents' perspectives on these policy questions. Most of the immigrant parents in our focus groups expressed a preference for family arrangements for child care for children under age three rather

than center-based child care. Most said that they valued a year or two of preschool to get their children ready for kindergarten. Most wanted the program to stress English-language acquisition, learning the routines of school, and academic readiness. All of the parents wanted their children's preschools to have staff members who knew their language and had respect for their culture.

PRESCHOOLS AS CRUCIBLES FOR THE CREATION OF NEW CITIZENS

Although our study clearly shows that there are often large gaps between the perspectives of immigrant parents and teachers, and that efforts to create, implement, and sustain dialogue and negotiation face formidable obstacles, we also found considerable goodwill on both sides and a sense of empowerment for teachers as well as parents in the moments when real dialogue between them has occurred.

Although there are risks to this venture, the risk of doing nothing is higher. What is at stake here is more than just improving early childhood education and care services for immigrant children and their families. In the contemporary world, preschools are the most salient sites where the immigrant's culture of home meets the culture of the host society. As such, preschools that serve immigrant children and their families are crucibles for the creation of new citizens, new communities, and hybrid social and cultural forms.

In the first great era of immigration in the United States in the early years of the twentieth century, settlement house preschools were charged with the mission of creating American citizens out of immigrant children. Most of these programs followed an assimilationist paradigm in which there was little respect for immigrant parents, scant interest in maintaining the heritage languages and cultural identities of immigrant children, and little appreciation for the contributions that new immigrants could (and inevitably would) make to the transformation of the host culture and society. Now, a century later, in another great period of immigration, preschools can play a new role—as sites not only for young children to become members of the new society, but for them and their families to join with preschool teachers and directors in a process of cultural and social construction.