

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AMONG IMMIGRANT PARENTS WITH YOUNG DEAF CHILDREN

by

Christi Batamula
A Dissertation
Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty
of
George Mason University
in Partial Fulfillment of
The Requirements for the Degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy
Education

Committee:

_____ Chair

_____ Program Director

_____ Dean, College of Education and Human
Development

Date: _____ Fall Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA

Family Engagement Among Immigrant Parents with Young Deaf Children

A Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at George Mason University

by

Christi Batamula
Master of Arts
Gallaudet University, 2002
Bachelor of Arts
Geneva College, 2000

Directors: Joseph Maxwell, Professor
Colleen Vesley, Assistant Professor
College of Education and Human Development

Fall Semester 2016
George Mason University
Fairfax, VA



THIS WORK IS LICENSED UNDER A [CREATIVE COMMONS
ATTRIBUTION-NONCOMMERICALS 3.0 UNPORTED LICENSE](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/).

Dedication

This is dedicated to my supportive and loving husband, Res. For my children, Isaac and Jaden, and my nephew Brian, I did this for you. May you remember and know that you can do anything you set your mind to. My cup runneth over.

This is also dedicated in fond memory of Dr. Amy Hile, a beloved co-worker and friend. Your work during your short time on earth has made a lasting impact on the field of Deaf education.

Acknowledgements

Though I am the author of this dissertation, it is not a work that I did, or could possibly have done, alone. Deciding to pursue a doctorate is something that may have been in the cards for me. I can clearly remember to my childhood when I was always making, “What if...” comments. My older sister, Jamie, would ridicule me for driving her crazy saying, “What if, What if, What if.” Luckily, my mother supported my curiosity and allowed me to explore and gain confidence in my quests. I am eternally grateful to both of them. I am curious by nature and always wondering why things are the way they are. I finally got the opportunity to put this curiosity to good use. A chance to read research literature, or observe life experiences and, not only ponder, “What if...”, but apply research to answer the statement. The problem with this is that it naturally brings about more, “What if’s”, so I am never fully satisfied. I will just call that job security. I feel empowered that I can build my work on the work of others who have gone before me and make a difference in the field of education. I could never have started or completed this degree without my rock-solid husband, Res. It was your encouragement that convinced me I could do it in the first place. Little did you know how much you would be giving up to support our growing family through all of this, including adding two children and a couple of moves. Your name deserves to be on here as much as mine does and I am so thankful for you. For my children, Isaac and Jay, and Brian, this was possible both because of you and in spite of you. You have taught me so much that allowed me to be open and sensitive in my research with families. Thank you for being patient and spending time without mom around so that I could make this happen. I have the best kids around. I would be remiss to leave out my pup, Mia Rose, who sat with me on many a sleepless nights and early mornings while I burned the midnight oil and went for Saturday runs with me to help me unwind and clear my head. For all of my friends, thank you for random meals, taking my children, listening to me vent, and sharing in the victories and setbacks. Specifically, I would like to thank the Ennis family. Natalie, Billy, Liam and Lily, there are no words for how amazing you all are. Last, I would like to give a huge thank you to my amazing committee. I cannot express what your shared time and expertise mean to me. I look forward to making you all proud as I continue my work. Your efforts make a big difference and I am thankful.

Table of Contents

	Page
List of Tables.....	vi
List of Figures	vii
List of Abbreviations.....	viii
Abstract	ix
Chapter One: Introduction.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Two: Review of the Literature.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Three: Methods.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Four: Findings.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter Five: Discussion.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Appendix A	139
Appendix B.....	140
Appendix C	142
References	143

List of Tables

Table	Page
Table 1. <i>Demographics of Participants</i>	Error! Bookmark not defined.

List of Figures

Figure	Page
<i>Figure 1.</i> Intersection of cultural systems on parenting and family engagement.....	Error!
Bookmark not defined.	
_Toc419712528	

List of Abbreviations

COO	Country of Origin
US	United States
DHOH	Deaf or Hard of Hearing
ASL	American Sign Language
CI	Cochlear Implant
ECE	Early Childhood Education

Abstract

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT AMONG IMMIGRANT PARENTS WITH YOUNG DEAF CHILDREN

Christi Batamula, Ph.D.

George Mason University, 2016

Dissertation Director: Dr. Joseph Maxwell and Dr. Colleen Vesely

This dissertation investigated the experiences of immigrant parents with young deaf children enrolled in bilingual early childhood education programs for the deaf. Focus was given to the parenting experiences of this population as they navigate, negotiate, and participate in different cultures including the local culture in their new host country, school culture, and deaf culture. Family engagement in immigrant parents' deaf children's education was examined as one aspect of parents' experiences. Specifically, it was used as a way to understand the experiences of immigrant parents. Immigrant families from nations around the world were interviewed about their experiences parenting a young deaf child in the United States. The findings of this study will be used to transform family engagement among ECE programs serving immigrant families with young deaf children.

Chapter One: Introduction

This study investigated the experiences of immigrant parents¹ with young² deaf³ children enrolled in bilingual⁴ early childhood education⁵ programs⁶ for the deaf. Focus was given to the parenting experiences of this population as they navigate, negotiate, and participate in different cultures including the local culture in their new host country, school culture, and deaf culture. While interacting with and navigating within these new cultural systems, immigrant parents are also maintaining and negotiating beliefs and values from the cultural systems of their countries of origin. Family engagement in

¹ In this study, immigrant parents are defined as one or more parents who are foreign-born and immigrated to the US at 12 years old or older.

² According to the National Association for the Education of Young Children, “young children” are between birth and eight years old.

³ In this study, the term deaf will be used with a lowercase d throughout the paper with the exception of reference to Deaf culture in the United States. In the United States, the term deaf is further defined by using a “D” for referring to Deaf culture and “d” for reference to deafness as a sensorial disability. “D” will also be used when talking about schools for the Deaf in America who identify themselves with using a “D”. This is discussed further in the literature review.

⁴ Bilingual school programs for the deaf include both American Sign Language (ASL) and English as languages of instruction. These languages are supported in both the academic and social context of the school.

⁵ Deaf children in the United States are entitled to receive early intervention educational services through their local public school starting at birth. These programs can include home visits and/or in-school sessions with professionals working with the deaf child (ie. teacher, speech therapist, ASL specialist, audiologist).

⁶ Schools for the deaf refer to schools that are designed specifically for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Programs for the deaf and hard of hearing include both schools for the deaf and programs within public school systems that serve deaf and hard of hearing students in self-contained or mainstream classrooms.

immigrant parents' deaf children's education was examined as one aspect of parents' experiences. Specifically, it was used as a way to understand the acculturation experience of immigrant parents. The intersection of these various cultural systems informs how these families rear their children, including how they engage in their young deaf child's education. Family engagement, in this study, focuses on the partnership and reciprocal relationship between families and early childhood education programs (Halgunseth, Peterson, Stark, & Moodie, 2009) as well as the family's engagement in the child's education and development in the home (Bouffard & Fischel, 2008). Family engagement is the number one predictor of school success, ranking above ethnicity and socio-economic status (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006). Therefore, it is important to understand how immigrant parents with deaf children engage in their children's education. In this study, the intersection of Deaf culture, school culture, and families' cultures rooted in immigrant families' cultures of origin coupled with their new, host culture, was examined to understand how this shapes the family's engagement with their young deaf child's education.

Culture, in this study, is defined as, "a *system* of individuals' conceptual or meaningful structures (minds) found in a given social system, and is not intrinsically shared, but participated in" (Maxwell, 2012a, p. 28). This definition goes beyond culture as a "shared" set of beliefs and values. At the micro level, it allows for individuality that exists in each household and each person who participates in a macro level cultural system such as Deaf culture, school culture, and family culture. For example, because a family is from a specific country does not necessarily mean that their beliefs and values

directly align with another family from that same country, or other families in their new host society. This also directly parallels with deafness and Deaf culture. Because a person is deaf does not mean that their beliefs align with Deaf culture or its Deaf community. However, neither family is more or less of a participant of that cultural system. Using this definition promotes openness to the individuality and personal experiences of the immigrant parents. It also takes away the tendency to stereotype and generalize people by associating their behaviors with being part of a cultural norm by accepting the variation within the cultural system instead of limiting it to what is “shared” by a group as being culture.

Children of immigrant parents are the fastest growing population in the United States (Matthews & Ewen, 2006). While there is no statistical data on the number of deaf children of immigrants, it can be assumed that the number is rising given the overall increase of immigrant children in the US (Matthews & Ewen, 2006). Immigrant families face being alienated in the school system with unfounded stereotypes and assumptions regarding them and their cultures (Gougeon, 1993). With a growing focus on family engagement in their children’s education, particularly for families who face unique challenges, it is important to understand how the cultural experiences of these diverse families impact how they engage in their children’s education. Examining how immigrant families with young deaf children navigate multiple cultural systems as they parent will help to build partnerships between families and early childhood education (ECE) programs working with families with deaf children.

Deafness affects many children, with two to four out of every 1000 children in the US being diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD), 2010). The statistics are even higher for children in developing nations due to the lack of treatment for ear infections and other illness leading to deafness as well as the lack of early intervention services (World Health Organization, 2013). Nine out of ten of these deaf children are born to hearing parents (NIDCD, 2010). Consequently, unlike many other cultural values children learn from their families (Epstein, Coates, Salinas, Sanders, & Simon, 2008), Deaf culture is generally not embodied in the home. Before becoming parents to a deaf child, most hearing parents have not had any meaningful contact with a deaf person and therefore, often spend the first few years of the child's life trying to figure out what it means, physically and culturally, to be deaf (Hulsebosch & Myers, 2002). Immigrant families with young deaf children must also experience this navigation of the construction of deafness; however, this is layered upon navigating a new host culture as well.

Some scholars suggest that ECE programs are key to immigrant families' adjustment and integration into new host societies (Vandenbroeck, 2006; Vesely, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2013). This is particularly evident when considering the bidirectional influence of parents and their children on one another (Ochoka & Janzen, 2008). While parents have a strong influence on the culture of the family, children can also influence this by adding their own experiences and understandings, particularly those learned in their ECE programs. Therefore, the children will bring home values and behaviors from various cultural systems as they interact and engage in their world beyond their families.

For young children, this happens primarily in their ECE program, as this is where they typically spend most of their time away from their family. This also impacts the interactions and relationships immigrant parents have with other parents in the school, as well as the teachers, which helps them figure out how to navigate the new society (Vandenbroeck, 2006).

There is limited research on family engagement among immigrant families with young children who are deaf. When families choose to place their children in bilingual programs for the deaf, they are then adding another language (ASL) and culture (Deaf) into their family. Deaf children attending bilingual schools are not only accessing education and socialization through ASL, they are also learning Deaf culture through immersion and enculturation (Nikolarazi & Hadjidakou, 2006). For immigrant parents, engagement in their children's education now adds navigating communication through ASL and understanding the cultural norms of Deaf culture, in addition to negotiating a new host culture.

Figure 1 shows a simplistic visual representation of the conceptual framework that guided this study. This study aims to explain how the family culture, school culture, and Deaf culture intersect to influence parenting, specifically family engagement in their young deaf child's education. Each cultural system does not operate independently in a person's life or family's life. Instead, each piece is influenced by the others and they cannot be separated. For example, one cannot just examine how a family (or individual) participates in Deaf culture without also considering the other systems within which the family participates.

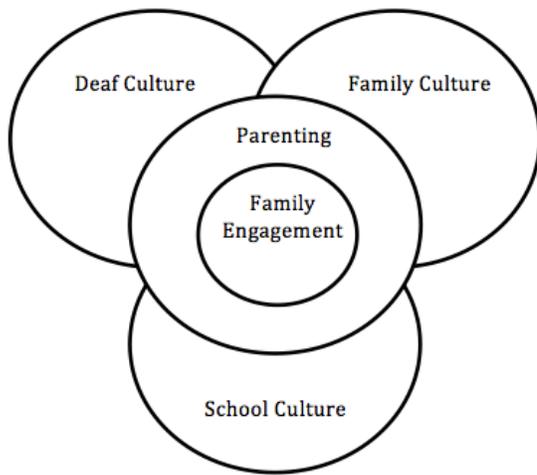


Figure 1. Intersection of cultural systems on parenting and family engagement. How cultures intersect and influence parental ethnotheories, specifically family engagement.

The importance of understanding how immigrant parents navigate various cultural systems is situated in two theoretical frameworks: 1) parental ethnotheories, one component of the developmental niche (Harkness & Super, 1996); and 2) eco-cultural theory (Weisner, 1997). These frameworks serve as a lens for explaining the importance and relevance of this study and a justification for the qualitative methods chosen to answer the research question (Ravitch & Riggan, 2016). They are brought together using Weisner's focus on daily routine as a way of understanding what Super and Harkness (1986) note in their developmental niche as families' customs of care. This is discussed further below. In addition, this study draws upon my own personal experiences as the wife of an immigrant who is deaf and the mother of our two young sons, and on my professional experiences as an ECE teacher of deaf children.

Parental ethnotheories (Harkness & Super, 1996) are the parenting beliefs and practices parents' hold within various cultural systems. How parents rear their children is influenced by the various cultural systems they are navigating. Parenting is shaped within the societies in which the parents learned how to parent. Specifically, parental ethnotheories are shaped by how parents were raised and the various cultural systems in which families participate. Thus, parenting behavior is affected by cultural beliefs and heritage, as well as social factors associated with ethnicity (Kotchick & Forehand, 2002). Further, the cultural structuring of child development can be framed within a developmental niche that includes the physical and social settings in which the children live, the customs of childcare and child rearing, and the psychology of the caretakers (Super & Harkness, 1986). Parental beliefs and practices of immigrants coming to the US after adulthood likely have strong roots in the cultural system of their country of origin. These parental practices are also being influenced by their new, local cultural systems, as well as various other cultural systems within which they are participants. Different cultural systems have varied views and beliefs regarding deafness, impacting parents' choices and how they raise children who are deaf.

Additionally, it is important to consider parents' practices or how their parenting beliefs are instantiated (Super & Harkness, 1996). Weisner's eco-cultural theory suggests that daily routines illustrate how ecological constraints and facilitators shape parents' values and beliefs. In other words, one can understand not only parents' ideas regarding parenting, but how they are able to carry out these beliefs depending on the structures of their daily ecology or environment. Daily routines are concrete, observable ways of

understanding the interaction of abstract beliefs and context. Ethnographic methods can unpack how aspects of the environment constrain or facilitate what parents want for their children, revealing richness of immigrant families' experiences (Weisner, 1997). For example, parents may indicate high value for education but then spend limited time at their children's school. Probing into this more deeply could reveal different ideas or beliefs about the role of parents' in schools or more structural concerns including, limited time due to the parent's work schedule or lack of understanding as to how to engage with the school in a new country. Considering parents' beliefs alongside practices, provides a more complete understanding of parents' ethnotheories and experiences.

Each parent has to develop their own understanding of what it means to be deaf (Hulsebosch & Myers, 2002), what is best for their children, and what their role is in the school and education of their children (Berry, 2003). This study explored this understanding from the perspectives of the immigrant parents with young children who are deaf. It addressed the questions: What are the experiences of immigrant parents with young children who are deaf as they navigate parenting across various cultural systems? How do these experiences shape family engagement among immigrant families with young deaf children?

This study brings together multiple bodies of literature to examine the experiences of immigrant families with young children who are deaf as they negotiate parenting and navigate bilingual deaf schools for young children. In particular, this study draws upon recent research on immigrant families with young children, as well as literature focused on families with deaf children, the role of culture in parenting, and family engagement in

children's education. These key areas build a basis for understanding the complex and unique experiences of these families as they engage in their children's education. As immigrant families experience family engagement in their young deaf children's education, Deaf culture, family culture, and school culture must all be navigated as they, at times, compliment and contradict one another.

Chapter Two: Review of the Literature

This chapter is a review of the literature focused on the experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children as they navigate cultural systems in their host countries, the school culture, as well as Deaf culture while negotiating culture from their countries of origin. The literature reviewed includes research on immigrant families, culture, and deafness. It also points to the need for more research to better understand the experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children. The literature review begins with a description of immigrant families and their experiences followed by the role of culture in families' lives, including family culture, Deaf culture, and school culture. It then covers the literature focused on the role of culture in parenting. It ends with a review of the literature on family engagement as one aspect of parents' experiences.

Immigrant Families

Children of immigrant parents⁷ are the fastest growing population in the US (Urban Institute, 2006). Twenty-four percent of children under five years old have at least one immigrant parent (Fortuny, Hernandez, & Chaudry, 2010). More recently, in 2014, 25% of children under the age of 18 have at least one immigrant parent (Zong &

⁷ For this study, immigrant families are defined as having at least one parent who immigrated to the United States (Wight, Chau, & Aratani, 2011). "Children of immigrants" or "immigrant children" refer to children, either foreign-born, or 1.5 generation (foreign-born children, immigrating before the age of 12), and second generation (native-born children of immigrant parents) (Hernandez, 1999).

Batalova, 2016). There is limited demographic data on the number of deaf children with immigrant parents. However, if we consider that the Mathers, Smith, and Concha (2000) identifies hearing loss as “the most frequent sensory deficit in human populations” (p. 1), such that in the US, over 1 in every 1,000 children are born deaf (Center for Disease Control, 2013), and that this number is higher in developing nations (World Health Organization, 2013), it is likely that a significant percentage of immigrant families may experience having a deaf child.

Immigrant families hail from various countries of origin and come to the U.S. with very diverse experiences and characteristics that shape their adjustment to life in the new host country. These varied experiences can be both positive and negative and may include increased opportunities for education, better employment opportunities, improved living conditions, as well as challenging language barriers, cultural differences, smaller support networks, and poverty (Shields & Behrman, 2004).

Resources and challenges. It is important to understand the immigrant experience, particularly among those families with young children who are deaf, to better meet the unique needs of this rapidly growing population. Immigrants move to their new host countries for a variety of purposes, but mainly to provide better opportunities, both financial and educational, for themselves and their children (Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011; Vesely, Goodman, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2014). These families will face many new experiences as a result of their immigration. Moving to a new country often means navigating new cultures and languages. These experiences can be very challenging, but immigrant families also possess resources that can help them navigate and overcome

these new challenges (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007). These assets and challenges can vary significantly among families, as there is diversity among and between the experiences of immigrant families. This can include family and community support, financial stability, and parental educational achievement. Understanding some of the assets and challenges these families may face will enable professionals working with these families to maximize on their capital to support them as they adjust to their life in their new land (Hernandez, Denton, & Macartney, 2007).

In addition, the experience of having a deaf child can cause many different emotions and experiences for all families. For some immigrant families, this experience, in the US, can bring benefits compared to the challenges they may have faced in their countries of origin. A family's perception of the causes of disabilities and illness as well as their understanding of normalcy impacts how they perceive disability (Rolland, 1994). This means that the families' beliefs about deafness, both culturally and as a disability can be impacted by how they understand normalcy and disability. For some populations where disabilities can be highly stigmatized, such as Latino and African, immigrant parents with deaf children still struggle with their extended family and community accepting their deaf child (Steinberg, Davila, Collazo, Loew, & Fischgrund, 1997; Vodounou, 2008). However, some immigrants find that, because they are in the US as opposed to their country of origin, their family has access to more services and resources (Steinberg et al., 1997).

Resources. Immigrant parents and their families have unique traits and experiences that can be very beneficial as buffers against the many challenges they may

face in adjusting to their new host country. Among them are determination, strong sense of family and community, and, for their children, the advantage of growing up bilingual and bicultural.

Determination. The main reason immigrants move to the US is to build a better life for themselves and their families (Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011; Vesely et al., 2014). They come with the mindset that their children can have a chance to become more than what they could if they stayed in their country of origin. English language skills and educational achievement can hinder the quality of gainful employment available to some immigrants. However, many work hard to overcome this barrier and work in various jobs, often more than one job, to sustain family life (Hernandez, 2009). Children of these determined parents benefit by learning the value of working hard and not giving up. This can encourage them to try harder in their academics.

Family and community support. Compared to children of native-born parents, children of immigrant parents are more likely to have two parent households (84% vs 76%). They are also more likely to live with extended family (grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins) and to have more siblings (Hernandez, et al., 2007). Living in two parent households has been correlated with academic success (Cherlin, 1999).

Children of immigrants are also more likely to have siblings (Hernandez, 2004). While this may bring some hardship to the family by having to divide time, attention, and resources (Hernandez, 2004), there are also advantages. Older children are able to care for younger children freeing up time for the parents to work or to attend to other children. It also can save money spent on childcare. Siblings can serve as companions for one

another as well as mutual support through life (Hernandez, 2004; Shields & Behrman, 2004).

Living with grandparents, aunts, uncles, older siblings, and other extended family can also be an asset for immigrant families. Approximately 40% of immigrant families live with other relatives and non-relatives in the homes compared to 22% of non-immigrant families (Shields & Behrman, 2004). They can contribute to the financial stability of the home. They also provide care, love, and support for others in the home. However, this does not hold true for all immigrant families and can be a hardship for those without familial and community support.

Bilingual and Bicultural. Children of immigrant parents often have a unique advantage of being fluent in another language. Fluency in a second language supports cognitive development and promotes language development by reinforcing the expressive and receptive knowledge of the first language (Lee, 1996). The addition of a language and culture also equips the child have the ability to relate to more people.

Challenges. Immigrant families may face many possible challenges as they navigate their new home. Among these challenges are higher risk of poverty, limited English proficiency, parental educational achievement, and immigration status (Elizalde-Utnick, 2010). Also, parental ethnotheories can vary significantly across immigrant parents, which impacts the ability of the parents to engage in their children's education. Parental ethnotheories impact the way parents raise their children, the children's view of the world, how families perceive and make decisions about having a deaf child, and how they interact with the school. When the parental ethnotheories do not align with the

majority culture, the parents and their children can become left out and left behind. There are many programs, such as early childhood intervention programs and medical programs, available to typically disadvantaged parents and families to help bridge the gaps, but many immigrant families are less likely than their native born peers to take advantage of such programs (Takanishi, 2004).

Higher poverty rates, limited access to resources. Research has long indicated the negative effects poverty can bring to children (Shonkoff & Meisels, 2000). It is attributed to negative adult socio-economic status, lower academic achievement, and higher rate of behavior problems (Borjas, 2011). For immigrant children, their risk of being poor is quite high. In a survey done by the Urban Institute in 2006, over half of all immigrant children in pre-k through fifth grade were from low socioeconomic families. Immigrant families are overrepresented in low-wage jobs, accounting for 20% of the population while only representing about 11% of the U.S. population. They are also less likely to have private, employer provided health insurance for their children.

Limited English proficiency. Many immigrants have limited knowledge of English, which can impact their ability to socialize and find gainful employment. Based on statistical data from The Urban Institute (2006), 58% of young children of immigrants had at least one parent with limited English proficiency (LEP). According to the government website on LEP (www.lep.gov, 2013), limited English proficiency individuals include those who do not speak English as their primary language and have limited abilities in reading, writing, and understanding English. To fully participate in the educational opportunities, children must learn the language of society. However, why

and when linguistic minority children learn English impacts the development of both English as well as their first, home language. Unfortunately, many immigrant children, particularly young children, learn English while eliminating their home language (Fillmore, 1991).

Limited English Proficiency also presents barriers to the accessibility of resources available to families in the US. Immigrant parents with LEP often do not take advantage of early childhood education programs or participate in health care options that are available to them (Liang, Fuller, & Singer, 2000; Shields & Behrman, 2004). There is no statistical data available for the number of deaf children of immigrant parents who attend educational early intervention programs, but it is likely that the numbers are also lower than that of their non-immigrant peers, given the lower participation levels of immigrants in any early intervention services (Matthews & Ewen, 2006). This is because immigrant parents may be less aware of the availability of the programs and may require more time to adapt to having a child who is deaf before deciding to begin early intervention services (Hulsebosch & Myers, 2002).

Parental education. Parental education has been proven to positively correlate to student academic success, the higher the education of the parents, the greater the probability of academic success of their children. Academic attainment varies by nativity with 68% (48% for Hispanic foreign-born) of the foreign-born population holding a high school diploma compared to 89% of their native-born peers. Often, academic attainment is also correlated with income. On average, workers with a bachelor's degree earned

\$20,000 more per year than workers with a high school diploma or GED (Ryan & Siebens, 2012).

Immigration status. Documentation status can have a significant impact on the experiences and opportunities of immigrant families. Undocumented immigrants face much higher rates of poverty. They are often unable to find steady gainful employment due to lack of authorization to work. Also, because they are undocumented, they are not able to receive government benefits available to those who reside in the US legally. Undocumented immigrant parents also avoid services that may be available to themselves and their children out of fear of deportation (Vesely, Letiecq, & Goodman, in press). This is even the case when they are undocumented and their children are U.S. citizens. Immigrant parents fear that enrolling their children in programs designed for low-income children and families may draw attention to them and their immigration status (Hernandez, 2009).

Immigrant families and school. Schools have the potential to be a key factor in how immigrant parents integrate into their new host society (Vandenbroeck, 2006; Vesely, et al., 2013). Parents are not the only transmitters of culture within the home; children also influence the family's role within various cultural systems (Ochoka & Janzen, 2008). Therefore, the children will bring home values and norms from various cultural systems as they interact and engage in their world. For children, this happens primarily at school (Halgunseth, et al., 2009). The immigrant parents also have to interact with other cultures and possibly languages when interacting with the other parents as well as teachers and administrators.

There are also other structural and cultural aspects of schooling that may or may not align with the understanding and expectations of the immigrant parents. For example, the US has laws that require all children to receive free appropriate public education (FAPE), regardless of their socio-economic status, abilities, or nationality (U.S. Department of Education & Office for Civil Rights, 2010). Also, many U. S. public schools follow some structural norms such as back-to-school nights, parent-teacher conferences, homework, grading systems, standardized tests, and grade levels (Kindergarten, 1st Grade, etc). For immigrant parents from regions such as sub-Saharan Africa, access to any education for their deaf child is something that is not guaranteed or even likely in their country of origin (Kiyaga & Moores, 2003), let alone being involved in their child's education.

Immigrant families and deafness. Deafness and hearing loss are prevalent all around the world. Worldwide, over 360 million people have a disabling (40dB or more) hearing loss (World Health Organization, 2013). Out of every 1,000 children both in the US, two to three are diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders, 2010). When the immigrant parents have a young deaf child, adjustment to parenting culture and school culture is further complicated by the addition of Deaf culture. Deaf culture, as a system, shares many values among participants in this system. For example, eye contact, visual communication, and anything that supports those two factors are valued (Ladd, 2003). In some other cultural systems, children making eye contact with adults is not acceptable and a sign of disrespect (Craig, Hull, Haggart, & Perez-Selles, 2000). Also, in some countries, deaf

children are not automatically granted the right or ability to enroll in schools, especially not schools designed specifically to meet the unique needs of a deaf child (Kiyaga & Moores, 2003). For example, as part of my work in the Dodoma region of Tanzania, in June 2011, we went to each village and hand counted the number of deaf, school-aged children and then counted the number of school-aged children in schools. The numbers showed that only two percent of deaf children had access to formal education.

Role of Culture in Immigrant Families' Lives

There is not one, agreed upon definition for culture (Baldwin, et al., 2005). The traditional definition of culture is the shared values, beliefs, and practices held by a community (Maxwell, 2012a), but this definition limits what culture actually encompasses. I used a distributive or distributional view of culture, in which culture is seen as “a complex knowledge system unevenly appropriated in social and political time and space” (Shore, 1996, p. 209). In other words culture, in this study, accounts for the variation among families as well as the environment in which they immigrated from, and currently live, as well as the conditions of their immigration. Culture, in this study, is defined not as necessarily "shared," but a system in which individuals with differing conceptual and meaningful structures participate (Maxwell, 2012a, p. 28). This system can include, but is not limited to, shared beliefs and practices. Immigrant families, by moving to a new country, are now adding to the number of cultural systems in which they participate. Their adjustment will include a give and take of various facets of the culture of their country of origin and their new, host country. The addition of deaf culture will

also impact this navigation and give and take as their family culture shifts through these new experiences.

This perspective does not limit culture to one common, shared practice or belief that all members follow, but rather allows for individual experiences within the system. Each person has one or more cultural systems in which they navigate in daily life. Gonzalez-Mena (2008) refers to them as “cultural frameworks” in which everyone operates. These can include, but are not limited to the following aspects of identities that intersect (Collins, 1998): race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, geographic location (both current and previous), social class, and abilities. Each of these frameworks or aspects of individual’s identities are important, but do not operate independently. Rather, they are all intertwined and interrelated. This is referred to as intersectionality (Collins, 1998). For example, a person is not just wealthy, Tanzanian, or a woman but rather all of these factors influence the person as aspects of her identity and impact how she operates in various cultural systems and determine her access to resources (Collins, 1998). What aspects of her identity she feels most salient can be influenced by many factors, including where she lives. For example, in Tanzania, she may not notice her Tanzanian identity, but when she moves to the US, her identity as a Tanzanian may become very salient. Anderson-Levitt (2002a) parallels this definition by stating that, “We can never assume that a particular body of knowledge is used by all the members of a particular group of people, or that a particular body of knowledge is limited to a particular group of people” (p. 20). This study focused on how immigrant families with young deaf children participate in the social systems of each culture and how their individual conceptual

structures are shaped within these systems. In the following sections, the literature on Deaf culture, school culture, and Deaf school culture as a part of school culture are reviewed for the unique role they play in how immigrant families with young deaf children navigate cultures.

Deaf culture. Worldwide, there are generally two paradigms for understanding deafness. There is a pathological perspective, which focuses on deafness as a physical disability, and the cultural perspective, which focuses on the Deaf person as belonging to a culture with its own language and cultural norms (Ladd, 2003). The deficit-based model typically focuses on how to give the deaf person more access to hearing. The goal is to make their hearing ability as close to normal hearing as possible. This deficit-based model typically supports oralism, the use of spoken language, as the preferred mode of communication and the target language for the deaf person. The second paradigm is a cultural model. The focus is on building the Deaf person's sense of pride in identifying as Deaf and through full access to communication through the use of American Sign Language (ASL) as the valued language of power (Reagan, 2002).

Deaf culture does not always follow the social norms of their hearing societies (Senghas & Monaghan, 2002). For example, because ASL is a visual language, Deaf culture places a high value on eye contact. However, some cultures do not accept children, or those perceived to be under their authority, to make eye contact with those perceived to be in authority. With over 90% of these deaf children born to hearing parents (NIDCD, 2010), many deaf people do not learn Deaf culture in their home. This is unlike many other societies where children learn the culture from their families

(Epstein, et al., 2008). Before becoming parents to a deaf child, many of these hearing parents might never have had any meaningful contact with a Deaf person and, therefore, often spend the first few years of the child's life trying to figure out what it means, physically and culturally, to be d/Deaf (Hulsebosch & Myers, 2002).

Each country has its own sign language and Deaf culture. The history and origins of Deaf culture can be traced back to the start of deaf education and Western Europe. Deaf education spread through other European countries, and then throughout the world along with colonization in North and South America, Africa, and Asia (Moore & Miller, 2009). Because of this, there are some shared values and beliefs within the cultural systems of Deaf culture that are shared between and across nations. However, within and between each country, there are different ways individuals and societies perceive deafness. Some nations, like Japan, have a strong value in their national identity and, therefore, are not supportive of deafness as a culture (Nakamura, 2006). They strongly promote oral education with the only signing, bilingual school in Tokyo being a private school, and very controversial. Other nations, such as Sweden, value the use of sign language for the deaf community and support hearing parents of deaf children to attend sign language classes to learn to communicate with their child (Padden & Humphries, 1988).

School culture. The culture of education, in this study, is focusing on the traditions, practices, and beliefs of the teachers, administrators, and families within a school. This includes the initiating business definition intended to understand structure in a school. Across nations, there are some similarities and marked differences in schooling

(Anderson-Levitt, 2002b; Spindler & Spindler, 1987; Tobin, Wu, Davidson, 1989). The similarities are more broad and general, such as, having a curriculum, or grouping children by age or grade and the differences are noticed in the detail, or, how the curriculum is interpreted and taught and what is important in the curriculum. For example, in a study report on classroom cultures in France and the US done by Anderson-Levitt (2002a), showed focus groups videotapes of two first grade classrooms (one in France, one in the US) with the students having whole group instruction. In the US, the children were seated on a rug on the floor. In France, the children were seated at their desks. These differences brought comments from viewers from each country. The US teachers thought that the students seated at their desks seemed that they were older than six years old because of how quietly they sat properly and attended. The French viewers of the American video were worried that it would be hard to manage behavior on the floor and that sitting on the floor could impede their learning to write. The critical differences in teaching cultures (Anderson-Levitt, 2002a), could impact the school experiences of immigrants with school-aged children.

Schooling choices for deaf children, in the US, can be quite controversial. There is a range of school programs that mostly represent the continuum of language choices for deaf children. These choices include oral programs, using only spoken language, total communication programs, using a hybrid of sign language and spoken language, and bilingual programs using ASL and printed language. Within each of these approaches, there is a continuum of language choices. For example, some oral programs use sign language for support of spoken language until the child is ready to fully use oral language

for communication. Likewise, some bilingual programs promote oral language as another language modality used in the classroom along with (but not simultaneously with) sign language and written language.

This study focused specifically on bilingual schools as they promote the use of ASL an important language for communication and, thereby, according ideas of languaculture (Agar, 1994; Horejes, 2012) where language and culture cannot be separated, follow the norms of deaf culture. Bilingual programs for the deaf also are valued as places where deaf children and adults can learn and pass on deaf culture. As mentioned earlier, 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents, so deaf schools have historically been the place where deaf culture is shared and passed on to children.

It is not feasible in terms of cost and logistics to provide a teacher of the deaf or a classroom interpreter for each deaf child in neighborhood schools. In some cases, most of the deaf children in a particular state could be spread out all over the state, with some school systems serving only one deaf student. To meet the needs of this unique population, most states have one to three schools for the deaf. Because many students do not live close to the school, many offer dormitories for the students to stay for the week (or an extended time). The students are bused home on the weekends, or at other specified breaks, and bused back to school on Sunday, or after the break is over. This study focuses on such schools or programs.

Bilingual schools for the deaf differ, culturally, from other national schools within the same nation. Historically, schools for the deaf have been a major contributing factor in the acquisition of deaf culture (Ladd, 2003). In schools for the deaf, deaf children are

exposed to sign language and deaf culture from their peers and teachers. These schools are not only providing academic learning, but accessible language and culture for their students. The National Association of the Deaf released a position statement on the importance of schools for the deaf. They state, “Deaf schools, an integral part of American history, have not only received quality education but also benefited from the fostering of its culture, heritage, and language through such essential institutions” (National Association of the Deaf, n.d.). In schools for the deaf, deaf children are able to be “normal” (Ladd, 2003). Instead of trying to fit into a hearing world, deaf children are able to communicate freely and feel comfortable in an environment that does not depend on using listening with your ears, but instead on touch and visual senses. There is no need to have to try to speak clearly or to try to understand someone using spoken language. With less focus on language learning, there can be more of a focus on academics (Ladd, 2003).

Multilingual teaching and learning. Deaf children enrolled in bilingual schools or programs for the deaf in the US are learning in both ASL and English (printed and, for some, spoken as well). Deaf children from immigrant families are often from homes where a language other than English is the primary language of the home. Sixty-one percent of immigrant children have parents who are Limited English Proficiency, and, in 2006, 19 percent of children ages 5-17 were had Limited English Proficiency (Urban Institute, 2009). This means that children of immigrant families are arriving to school without a strong foundation in English. It also has implications for how the families may engage in the school.

For young deaf children of immigrants, they enter school where they learn about English and ASL. Schools often struggle to teach these languages by building on the skills in their native language they already possess. For deaf children, they depending on the age they enter their school program and the languages used in the home, they may enter school with very little or fragmented language skills in any language. Often, due to a lack of resources, schools and programs practice subtractive bilingualism (Baker, 2011). This approach to bilingualism means teaching a new language without regard for continuing to build skills in the first language. In the case of deaf education, this would mean teaching ASL and English while not attending to the development of the language of the country of origin.

Language also creates a barrier to, and isolation from, family engagement in the school. With 61 % of immigrant parents being limited English proficient (Fortuny, et.al., 2010), families and schools need to overcome language barriers in order to establish effective family engagement (Carreón, et. al., 2005). When the child is attending a deaf school or program using ASL, the parents are then faced with an additional language barrier that prevents them from having the same access to school engagement as their non-immigrant peers.

This can impact how the family interacts with their child and how they engage in their children education. As the child attends school, they are learning academic and social language in ASL and English. The family may not have the same skills in either language and, therefore, are unable to engage with what their child is learning due to language access.

Parenting, Culture, and Immigrant Families

Parenting is situated within a larger social context and includes specific focus to the family, the child being parented, and the parents themselves (Luster & Okagaki, 1993). There is wide variation in attitudes and beliefs about parenting within and between sociocultural niches of parenting (Kelley, Power, & Wimbush, 1992). Yet still, it is accepted that cultural norms influence parents' beliefs and practices (Albrecht, 2011). There are some parenting beliefs and practices that are shared throughout much of the world. For example, most parents want the best for their children (Save the Children Sweden, 2008). However, what "best for their children" means and the routine and practice of how this is achieved can vary within and across cultural systems. "Parental ethnotheories" (Harkness & Super, 1996) is a frame that can be used to understand how culture shapes child rearing, and specifically parents' beliefs and practices related to raising children. Parental ethnotheories are "cultural models that parents hold regarding children, families, and themselves as parents" (Harkness & Super, 2013, p. 138). Harkness and Super (1996) draw on the work of D'Andrade and Strauss (1992) and Quinn and Holland (1987) to define a cultural model as "an organized set of ideas that are shared by members of a cultural group" (p. 138). Understanding parental ethnotheories is very important to understanding how families view their children, what parents believe about child development, and how they parent, including how parents engage in their young deaf child's education.

Parents' ideas about child development are complex, and shaped by the cultural systems in which they operate. Harkness and Super have done numerous studies (i.e.

Harkness & Super, 2006; Harkness, Super, & van Tijen, 2000; Parmar, Harkness, & Super, 2004) around the world, cross-nationally comparing what parents believe about parenting and child development and how they parent young children. Differences in parental ethnotheories do not exist only among nations and cultural systems that are quite different, but even in what could be considered similar societies. For example, in some of Harkness and Super's work they focus solely on "Western societies" that are typically accepted as being culturally similar (Harkness, Super, & van Tijen, 2000). For example, they found that American and Dutch families have different ethnotheories of the child and, therefore, their descriptions of their children were quite different. The American parents referred to their child's intelligence by speaking about how alert they are and how much intellectual stimulation they give their babies to build on this intelligence. However, Dutch parents emphasized the child's social competence and bragged about how they like to be helpful and about their cheerful dispositions (Harkness, Super, & van Tijen, 2000).

Parenting among immigrant families with deaf children. For many hearing parents, their deaf child is the first deaf person they ever meet (Hulsebosch & Myers, 2002). Parents of deaf children have different views on deafness that can impact the way they react to the news that their child is deaf. Although, in the US, there is increasing awareness of the success and abilities of deaf people, many hearing parents still view their child's deafness as a disability (Koester & Meadow-Orlans, 1990). The results of the National Parent Project Survey showed that race/ethnicity influenced the parents'

feeling about deafness. It showed that Hispanic mothers, overall, reported a more negative reaction than White mothers (Sass-Lehrer, Mertens, & Meadow-Orlans, 2003).

Erting (1982) noted that it is critical to understand that deafness is primarily a visual experience. While typically developing hearing children can both see their environment and hear what is being said in the environment, deaf children must split their attention between looking at the environment around them and looking at a speaker for meaning (Niehuys & Tikotin, 1983). Language development is also impacted by the different modes of communication used in the home. Hearing family members do not often use the same mode of communication as the deaf child. This limits their ability to have meaningful social interactions (Henderson & Hendershott, 1991). This is frustrating for both the child and the parents (Freeman, Dieterick, & Rak, 2002).

Ochocka and Janzen (2008) argue that it is simplistic to try to understand immigrant parenting through a cultural lens. Social support has been identified as one key aspect in successful parenting. Immigrant parents face a unique challenge with this in their new host country, “they lose the social structure that supported their parenting values, beliefs, and strategies, and they encounter a new culture in which these orientations are questioned” (Ochocka & Janzen, 2008, p. 86). They also stand apart from host-country born parents because they are raising their children in a new cultural system. The parents are navigating many new experiences in their new environment while maintaining a stable environment for their children (Levine, 1980). The parenting experiences are even more complex and unique when they are raising a deaf child.

The evolution of parenting and family engagement is likely to be significantly impacted through parenting a young child who is deaf. The family culture and language as well as how the parent perceives and interacts with their child is likely to change as well. These changes may also impact the way the family engages in the child's education, which is the premise of this study.

Family Engagement

Family engagement literature is reviewed broadly with the intention of building a definition or understanding of family engagement based on the experiences and views of the study participants, immigrant families with young children who are deaf. Family engagement includes reciprocal partnership between families and their child's early childhood program (Halgunsh, et. al., 2009) as well as engagement in their child's education in their home (Bouffard & Fischel, 2008). It is important to note the distinction between family engagement and parent involvement. Parent involvement is often focused on the parent-initiated "tasks" parents do to support education both at school and at home, and often takes a deficit-based perspective focusing on what parents are *not* doing rather than what they *are* doing. Family engagement, on the other hand, is strengths-based focused on *partnerships* between families *and* early childhood education programs (Halgunseth et. al., 2009). Through understanding how the experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children inform their understanding of family engagement, this study may contribute to building a definition of family engagement that "focuses on strengthening the relationship between families and early childhood

education programs as a means to improving child well-being.” (Halgunseth, et. al., 2009, p. 4).

According to Weiss, et al. (2006), family engagement is a critical component of academic achievement. Families have their own understandings of their role and the schools role in the education of their child (Berry, 2003). Programs need to develop strategies for meeting diverse families’ needs to support family engagement (Halgunseth, et. al, 2009). In this study, family engagement, one domain of parents’ lives, is examined as a way of understanding the parenting experiences of immigrant families with a young deaf child. Connecting with children’s schools is an important part of the family acculturation process because the involvement of the family in their child’s education can have a significant impact on school success (Weiss, et al, 2006). With the number of immigrant children increasing each year (Matthews & Ewen, 2006), schools need to attend to meeting the needs of this population (Carreon, Drake, & Barton, 2005).

Even if schools are open to family engagement, it does not mean that they will succeed in communicating with families across cultures. This could be particularly true for working with immigrant families. According to Katz (1991), children, through interactions with their parents, enter school with scripts of the culture of society and their role in that society. Unfortunately, for children whose family culture does not match the majority culture of the school, this script does not match the expectations of the school. Therefore, these children start off at a disadvantage because they must learn the cultural scripts of the school in order to succeed. Also, the fact that their cultural script is not accepted in the school implies that their culture is not the culture of power. A study

interviewing 27 teachers in a public, urban senior high school about the barriers and bridges in communicating with ESL minority students and their parents describes these children as alienated (Gougeon, 1993).

Involving families in the school and education of their child helps the teachers to learn the culture of the child and family and alienation by opening communication and understanding on both parts (Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011). Many school systems are currently failing to provide this opportunity for parents. Babu's (2006) qualitative study grounded in feminist theory used focus groups and follow-up interviews with Asian-Indian mothers with children currently in school or children who attended local schools in the past. In this study participants shared their challenges of schooling children navigating divergent cultures between their home and the children's "white American school" and community at large. Through this study Babu (2006) concluded that schools are failing to create culturally responsive environments. Family engagement is a key motivating factor for all students, particularly immigrant and diverse families (Marrero, 2009).

Family engagement for immigrant parents with a deaf child. The process of navigating family engagement for immigrant families is complicated even further when the child is deaf. When the child is deaf, families have additional decisions and cultural norms to navigate to provide their children with the education and experiences they need for success. Furthermore, how families perceive and interpret the news of the child being deaf could have ties to the family's culture. This can impact how families process their children's deafness and how they engage in their children's education.

One of the additional challenges immigrant parents with young deaf children face is school choice. School choice for deaf children is a challenge for hearing, American families with deaf children, where the culture values the rights of deaf people and persons with disabilities. It is a further complicated process for immigrant families with deaf children (Medina, 2011). For immigrant parents, particularly those from developing nations, the view on deafness and disability can be very different than that in the US. In sub-Saharan Africa, views on deafness range from acceptance, to pity and shame, which can lead to alienation (Nassozi & Moore, 2003). School is often not an option for these children and when it is, there is limited access to the curriculum with little to no modification to meet diverse needs (Peters, 2007). Therefore, families immigrating from these cultures may have a hard time with the concept of deafness as an ability and imagining a productive, successful future for their Deaf child. Parents often rely on professionals and personal experience when deciding the school for their Deaf child (Medina, 2011; Steinberg, Bain, Li, Delgado, & Ruperto, 2003). While Medina (2011) does not address families with young deaf children, her research points to the struggle newly arrived Latino immigrants experience when choosing schools for their children. Steinberg, et. al (2003) conducted a study of 29 Hispanic families with hearing-impaired children⁸ between the ages of 3 and 13. The study looked at decision-making for the deaf child found that, due to language and cultural barriers, families tended to choose the school placement and communication mode that was recommended by a professional.

⁸ Hearing-impaired is a medical term and not used in the Deaf community because of the deficit view of being impaired or disabled. The socially acceptable term is deaf or hard of hearing. In this case, the authors of the paper used hearing-impaired so I used it to describe their work.

Professionals should be prepared to be open and sensitive to the diverse culture and perspectives of immigrant families with deaf children.

Families with children in bilingual programs for the deaf add Deaf culture and American Sign Language to the family culture and languages (Nikolarazi, et al., 2006). These families now need to learn ASL as they continue to gain proficiency in English. As they acculturate into American culture and the culture of the American school system their children are also acculturating into Deaf culture (Berry, 2003; Grosjean, 2010). Immigrant families engaging in the school now add the extra challenge of navigating communication through ASL and Deaf culture.

Because ASL is a visual language, it is accessed through eye contact. Eye contact means engagement, even if there is a voice interpreter present, the receiver of the message is expected to make eye contact with the Deaf speaker. Other norms in Deaf culture include touch (hugging, touching to get attention), limitation of visual noise (for example, clutter in the visual environment such as flowers on a table or heavily decorated walls), and being connected through the experiences of being deaf.

There are a growing number of studies that examine family-school engagement among immigrant families with deaf children of a variety of ages (Babu, 2008; Calderon & Greenberg, 1999). Understanding how families understand family engagement will help schools build collaborative definitions that include immigrant families with young deaf children. This will help lead to the successful engagement of these families in the schools and, ultimately, provide their young deaf child with a better chance for academic success (Weiss, Caspe, & Lopez, 2006).

This study explored the family engagement experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children. Understanding how these families engage in the education of their young deaf child was viewed as an aspect of parenting and a window into their experiences raising young deaf children in the US. To include these immigrant families so that early childhood education programs can better serve them, we must first understand the complex parenting, cultural, and family engagement experiences of each family. The literature review points to a lack of research in family engagement among immigrant families with young deaf children. The literature is clear that there are tremendous benefits to family engagement and that families from different backgrounds engage in various ways that may or may not be understood or accepted by the school. In this study, immigrant families are also learning a new language and culture with their young deaf child. It is important to understand how the intersection of these cultures and languages impact how they engage in their deaf child's education and how they view family engagement. This study addressed the questions: What are the experiences of immigrant parents with young children who are deaf as they navigate parenting across various cultural systems? How do these experiences shape family engagement among immigrant families with young deaf children? This study aims to grow awareness and understanding of these experiences and, ultimately, to provide a foundation for successful family engagement experiences for this growing population.

Chapter Three: Methods

Though the rationale for this research can be grounded in the literature, my motivation for conducting this study is based largely on my own experiences as an early childhood educator for the deaf, the wife of a first generation immigrant who is Deaf, and the former legal guardian of a first generation immigrant child with special needs who immigrated to the US at the age of four.

As a teacher for the deaf, I worked with a diverse group of students and their families. My motivation for doing this research holds tightly to my own reflection on my personal experiences. As an educator, family engagement was not only one of my passions, but a strength of mine. I spent hours going on home visits, writing in communication journals, and emailing and texting family members. When I had students with immigrant parents, I continued this practice with the addition of language translation (when available). When several of these parents did not respond or were unavailable for home visits, I assumed it was lack of time or interest in being involved in the school. Now, I realized that I never asked these families how they wanted to be engaged in their child's education in partnership with me, as the teacher, and the school.

I also have personal experience with immigration and navigating education through my role as a wife and mother. My husband, who is a Deaf immigrant, is learning as he goes about school engagement in our children's schooling. Both of our school-aged

children are served through Individualized Education Program (IEPs). While I, as the non-immigrant mother, handle a lot of the school matters, my husband works hard to understand how to be involved and what it means. He often expresses frustration at the assumption that he understands what a “share day” is, or an IEP addendum, a requirement to chaperone a field-trip, or even the need to help with and sign homework each night. As a parent to my nine-year-old immigrant nephew, I see well-intended teachers and staff, during meetings, seeing his struggles as language and cultural barriers that will fade over time, and therefore trying to label him as non-disabled and not needing an IEP. It is important that I remain aware of my personal involvement in this study so as to recognize my own assumptions, potential bias, and interpretation of the data.

I used elements of a grounded theory qualitative approach because it allows me to gain insight into the experiences of the families in this study. I sought to gain insight into the experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children navigating participation in different cultures. I examined how these families navigate, adopt, and reject various aspects of culture from their country of origin, their host country, and Deaf culture through family interactions and interviews. Interviews also focused on acculturation and the impact on family-school engagement between the family and the early childhood educational program of their young child. My research question was best answered using qualitative research methods because qualitative methods allow the researcher to listen to the unique stories of each individual family (Creswell, 2007). It is a study of a population that historically not been heard. This study was IRB approved by both George Mason University and Gallaudet University.

Data were collected and analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Specifically, this study used constructivist grounded theory as described by Charmaz and Balgrave (2012). Constructivist grounded theory is based on the belief that theories need to be constructed as opposed to discovered (Bryant & Charmaz, 2007). Constructivist grounded theory follows the steps of grounded theory in data collection, analysis, coding, memo writing, and generation of theory, but recognizes the situation in which the theory is being constructed including the position of the researcher as well as the research situation (Silverman, 2016, p. 305). Because there is little to no research examining the family engagement experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children, theories have yet to be built and this method will create “useful tools for learning” (Charmaz & Balgrave, 2012, p. 349). The goal was to determine how the immigrant families with young deaf children construct their understanding of engagement in their child’s education as they navigate through various cultural systems. Each family had their own understanding and ideas about school engagement as it relates to their experiences in the US and in Deaf culture.

Participants

Participants included immigrant families with a young deaf child enrolled in a bilingual school or program for the Deaf. Immigrant families are defined as having at least one parent who is a first generation immigrant to the US, arriving after the age of 14. Fourteen is selected as the minimum immigration age because then the immigrant parent(s) spent their formative years immersed in the culture and language of their country of origin.

The age criteria for “young” deaf child is birth to eight years old as this is the age categorized as early childhood education (NAEYC, 2003). I chose this age group because I want to talk with the parents while they are still learning American Sign Language and Deaf culture and potentially, still processing how ASL and Deaf culture fit into their daily lives and routines, and their home culture. Deaf children are eligible to start either schooling or services from early intervention from the school system at birth, so the selected participants have a deaf child already enrolled in school.

All of the deaf children from immigrant families in this study were enrolled in bilingual programs for the Deaf. This means that the schools teach in both ASL and English in a bilingual teaching model (Lange, Lane-Outlaw, Lange, & Sherwood, 2013). Choosing families with children in bilingual programs provided me with families with children who are learning or currently use ASL and, subsequently, follow the norms of Deaf culture, at least while at school.

Eleven families participated in the study. The ideal goal was between 20 to 25, but finding willing participants who met the study criteria and scheduling interviews around the country proved harder than anticipated. This sample size still allowed me to gather more data from lived experiences of many families to gain the fullest understanding of my research question possible. It was a challenge to select families based on specific characteristics, such as Latino families, outside of what I have already specified due to the small population size. There were some participants from similar regions of the world, so I was able to identify some common themes in experiences and expectations from families.

Participants were recruited primarily through personal connections in bilingual early childhood education programs in the US. Bilingual early childhood programs use pedagogical practices that include both English and ASL as languages of instruction. Connections can also be made through the Deaf community. The Deaf community is a minority community that shares connections across the US and abroad. It is very common to meet a new deaf person and immediately start to name other Deaf community members that you both know. Therefore, families were also located using the snowball method. As with the general population, some bilingual programs for the deaf have a higher population of immigrant families. This could be due to the geographic location with the school population matching the community population. Therefore, many of the participants came from a small handful of schools for the Deaf around the country.

Participant Demographics

I interviewed 11 families with young (birth to eight years old) deaf or hard of hearing children. The families represented a very diverse population. Families were located in various states all around the US. Four of the families had deaf parents and seven had parents who are hearing. Families were from various countries and regions from around the world. All of the families were from countries that can be considered “developing countries”. This is not to imply that the countries are lacking anything, but rather they are developing economically and one of the impacts is availability of resources, including education for persons with disability. Three families were from Mexico, two families were from Somalia, one family was from Kenya, one family was from Sri Lanka, one family was Thailand, one was one family was from Mali, one family

was from Guinea, one couple was from Peru (father) and El Salvador (mother), and one couple was from Ethiopia (father) and Somalia (mother). All of the deaf and hard of hearing children were enrolled in schools for the deaf using American Sign Language and English as the primary languages of instruction. Five of the interviews were done using spoken language translators, translating from the family’s native tongue to spoken English. Four were conducted using American Sign Language, and two were conducted in spoken English without any translation.

Table 1

Demographics of Participants

Family	Family Pseudonym	COO	D/H Parents	Age of D/HOH Child
1	Perera, Chathrua (F)	Sri Lanka	Deaf	7 and 5
2	Toure, Chathura (F)	Mali	Deaf	18 months old
3	Kirui, Haweeyo (M) Aasiya (S)	Kenya	Hearing	4 years old
4	Ploy	Thailand	Hearing	2 years old
5	Shire, Halgan (M)	Somalia	Hearing	3 years old
6	Dula, Abebe (F) Idel (M)	Ethiopia and Somalia	Hearing	4 years old
7	Hernandez, Carlos (F)	Mexico	Hearing	5 years old

	Anna (M)			
8	García, Jose (F)	Mexico	Hearing	5 years old
	Maria (M)			
9	Diallo, Joseph (F)	Guinea	Hearing	4 years old
10	Martínez, Rosa (M)	Mexico	Deaf	5 years old
11	Pérez, Luis (F)	Peru and	Deaf	7 months old
	Elisa (M)	El Salvador		

Note. F = Father, M = Mother, S = Sister, COO = Country of Origin, D = Deaf, H = Hearing.

Each of the 11 interviews was very insightful and raw. Several of the families cried at some point as they shared their stories. This seemed to happen most when talking about where they see their child in 20 years. While the sample size is relatively small, it still allowed me to see similarities and differences in experiences across and between families.

Data Collection

Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and family observations. Interviews and observations were with one family at a time. The interviews lasted for about one hour at a location of the family's choosing. One was at a meeting room at a school, four were at a coffee shop, two were on a college campus, and four were in the family's home. My suggestion was to meet in their home or a comfortable public location such as a park or the library. The preference was to meet in the family's home because it could help me develop a sense of what they value and their culture through observing the

home environment and how the family interacts at home. I also felt that the setting may make the family more comfortable to share their personal thoughts and experiences. I was concerned that meeting outside the home may lead to more of a discrepancy between what the families say and what they do because I would have very little opportunity to observe family actions and interactions. However, I realized that interviews held outside of the home were still insightful and not much different from interviews in the home. This could likely be because the interviews in the home were conducted during the day when the children were at school and most of them only had one parent present at that time.

Participants were from various locations around the US. My time with each family was limited due to distance and travel time. I was able to find areas that had several participating families so that I could limit my travel and increase my time by spending a couple of days in each geographic location interviewing the families. It is important to have a common ground or a sense of comfort with each family to build rapport and help to build trust between each family and myself. I found that this was accomplished most through the mutual person organizing the interview. Having a common person that the family trusted was a huge help in allowing them to open up.

Observations were informal and based on what I saw during the time spent with the family. I observed how the family interacts with one another, the home environment (if seen), and the perceived comfort level of the family talking about family-school engagement and parenting a deaf child. I kept anecdotal records of any observations. I did not conduct school observations or any interviews with the teachers or the schools. I

based findings solely on the experiences, views, and perspectives of the parents. This is to ensure that the parents are truly heard and understanding is drawn from their own perspective and experience. Because I work in the field of deaf education, my own experiences and knowledge of each school may impact my findings. I kept this in mind when interviewing families and transcribing and analyzing data, to be sure to recognize my own assumptions and biases, and instead focused on what the family actually said.

The interviews were videotaped or audiotaped, depending if they were conducted in ASL or spoken language. The purpose of the recordings was for transcription purposes only. Videotaping when sign language is used for an interview is equivalent to using audiotape for a voiced interview. This included signing between the researcher and the family (in ASL and in ASL translated from a different sign language), signing between the family and the deaf child, and signing between the researcher and the deaf child.

Data Analysis

During the data collection part of the research, I kept memos to document any reflections and notes about the interviews and potential themes and unique information. These memos also served as part of the data, particularly where they noted observations about the interview, such as who was present, the general comfort and tone of the interview, how the family interacted with the deaf child and with one another, and other relevant observations. All of the interviews were transcribed. Data were analyzed using open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2007) which is consistent with grounded theory. I read and reread through the transcripts as well as repeatedly listened to or viewed the interviews (depending on if they are in ASL or a spoken language). This helped to find as

many potential themes through open coding. Substantive themes were created after reviewing and analyzing the data collected from the interviews and observations. Data were entered into matrices (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Maxwell, 2012b), sorted by themes and compared within and across interviews. Data were analyzed for potential themes in and across family experiences navigating and participating in various new cultures as a result of their immigration and becoming parents to a deaf child. Themes that were common across interviews were noted and presented in order to generate new theories on how immigrant families with young deaf children navigate the intersection of cultures as they engage in their child's education.

Potential Limitations

One limitation for this study was the size of the population being studied. The families that fit the research criteria were scattered around the US. I traveled to where the families were to conduct interviews. This is not a longitudinal study, so my time with each family was limited to the interview session. In a qualitative study, it is important to build a relationship with the participants to establish trust. A person is more likely to be comfortable and open with someone they feel they can trust. Each interview was secured through a connection in the school or in the community. This meant that the participants and I were connected through a person we both knew. This connection proved to be very valuable in helping the families to feel more comfortable in opening up to me, a stranger.

Another potential limitation is the generalizability of the study. The aim was to include 20-25 families in this study to best answer the research question, but I was only able to secure 11 families. Also, because of the limited population size, most of these

participants were from different COOs and therefore, data are not representative in a statistical sense (Maxwell & Chmiel, in press).

Participating families were from a diverse sample of countries of origin. This posed a challenge for me because I am not familiar with all of the cultural norms and expectations from each culture. This proved to be particularly challenging when I was a visitor in the family's home. Fortunately, the persons who arranged my interviews were very helpful in giving me a brief cultural sensitivity training, such as when and where to remove my shoes, what to wear, and other tips like that.

Another limitation was that six of my interviews were conducted through the use of language translators, two were conducted in spoken English, and four were conducted in ASL. I feel confident about the two interviews conducted in English. I transcribed the interviews in ASL into English myself and asked interpreters and deaf colleagues for verification of translation. The interviews using spoken language translation relied solely on the translation of the person hired to translate live in during the interview. This was, at times, frustrating as I am not positive the message translated was always what the speaker meant to say. As often as feasible, I repeated what I understood the speaker to say for verification. Also, there was a concern that some translators would use language that was negative to describe deaf and hard of hearing people, as may be common in their COO. To avoid this, I spoke with the translators beforehand and explained how I would be talking about deaf and hard of hearing people. I then inferred how the parents viewed their DHH child through how they answered questions such as learning of their child's being deaf or their hopes and dreams for their child.

Chapter Four: Findings

This section presents the findings from the research study. It answers the research questions: What are the experiences of immigrant parents with young children who are deaf as they navigate parenting across various cultural systems? How do these experiences shape family engagement among immigrant families with young deaf children? The findings from this study shed light on the unique experiences faced by immigrant families with young deaf children.

Families participating in this study were very diverse. Out of the 11 families interviewed, four were deaf parents (both mother and father), the rest of the families included hearing parents. Between the 11 families, 10 different countries are represented from Africa, Asia, Mexico and Central America, and South America. While the sample was quite diverse, there are some common themes among the experiences of these families. All of the participants migrated from developing countries. This could contribute to some of the similarities in the themes. For example, each family shared that the overall view of deaf and hard of hearing people in their COO is negative. They noted that there are little to no resources available to them and that people look down on them. This was consistent across each participant, though their experiences within their COO varied.

This section will examine the findings of this study, including emergent themes and also where the experiences align with the literature. It builds a framework of parenting for these families through their journey from learning that their child is deaf, to navigating services and support, to engaging their child's education. Individual family stories will be shared as well as new, collective knowledge gained from the interviews.

This section begins with the families' experiences in learning that their child is deaf. This includes their reaction and their attitudes. It notes the differences between this experience between hearing and deaf families as well as the extended family. The chapter then addresses the themes of the importance of family support, navigating choices for their deaf children, and then parenthood. There are three main themes associated with parenthood. One is family engagement which focuses on the home and includes the implications of the families choosing ASL for their child, the language used in the home, and the families' experiences learning ASL. The second theme associated with parenthood is school engagement. This addresses the differences in the educational systems from their COO and the US, the role of the schools in engagement, and the role of the families in engagement. The final theme under parenthood is the families' goals for their deaf children.

Your Child is Deaf

Early identification requirements in the US have enabled families to know if their baby is deaf or hard of hearing days after the babies are born. Many of the children from this study were born in the US, so these families learned that their child was deaf within days after birth. Three of the deaf children were born in their COO. Of these three

children, one was identified a few months after birth, the second not until he was a toddler and the third did not become deaf until 3 years old.

Thankful for a healthy baby. When asked about their experience learning that their child is deaf, many families responded that they were just happy that the baby was healthy. While it may have been a surprise for them regardless if the parents were deaf or hearing, it was more important that the baby was healthy overall. The deaf parents were quickly accepting and even excited by the news. The hearing parents took time to process and, while happy to have a healthy child, were still discovering, at the time of the interview what it means to parent a deaf child.

Adama Toure (deaf) shared that he and his wife learned that their baby was deaf through the newborn hearing screening at the hospital. The Toure's are both deaf but Adama shared his surprise at the news.

So, we had the test and the baby was deaf! WOW! We were thankful because it did not matter if the baby was hearing or deaf. It did not matter either way. I went back home to meet my family and we were all very excited.

Elisa and Luis Pérez, also deaf, had similar experiences of being surprised at the news and being excited as well.

Elisa: I was surprised at first. Like, wow! He is deaf. We had hoped to be deaf parents of a deaf child.

Luis: If he was deaf, it was fine, I knew. If he was hearing, that would be fine as well, but he is deaf.”

Rosa Martínez, also deaf, shared her reaction to learning during her pregnancy that her daughter may be born deaf (which she was).

They asked about my baby's father. I said he was from a deaf family and has a deaf brother. The doctor said really? And I said yes. Two weeks later, the doctor told me there was a 50% chance my child would be deaf. The doctor asked, if the child is born deaf, what would you decide to do? I was shocked. What kind of question was that? I was deaf myself and the baby would be like me.

Her response, and the responses of the other deaf families about having pride in being deaf and having a deaf baby is a typical response for parents in the Deaf community in America. This is often because they have grown up deaf and experienced success and know their child can do the same. This aligns with what Elisa implied in her interview that it is normal to want to have a child who is culturally and linguistically like you. It is something most parents never even think about as it is a given.

For the hearing families, their memories and experiences of learning that their children were deaf varied. Some families recalled that they were shocked by the news, but were mostly focused on the positive, or focused on action, what to do next. Some families shared about how the news impacted them emotionally. Maria García had an emotional experience not being completely sure if her baby could hear or not. She received conflicting information from professionals and it seemed all too much for her. Maria took the baby to Mexico because she was in denial that he was deaf. She needed time and to see for herself that her son was deaf. Maria shared about her experiences though this time that lasted over a year before she learned that he indeed was deaf.

When he was born, he didn't pass, you know, the hearing test. At the hospital, they told me could hear from one side but not the other side. And I wasn't sure if he couldn't hear or not. You know, he turned one and I talked with him, and nothing. And then he got some therapy, and the therapist said that he could hear. Then another male therapist, he told us he doesn't hear. Because he doesn't pay attention when you talk to him. Then I felt bad when I realized that he couldn't hear. I was very sad. And he got some therapy, but even though, he didn't improve. When he turned one, he couldn't hear, he didn't say a word. When we went out, he could see everything, but he didn't hear. We went to Mexico, I took him with me. There were many kids around, many neighbors. They called his name but he didn't answer. They had to touch him. He didn't pay attention. His sister had to pull him to play with the other kids. That's when I realized I had to leave Mexico, because the kid could not hear.

Ploy learned of her son being deaf while living in a refugee camp in Thailand. It was not until he was two years old that he was identified as deaf. She shared that he seemed "normal" when he was born. However, when he was a couple of months old, she and her mother noticed that he did not react to loud noises. It was not until he was two years old and not talking that someone suggested that maybe he was deaf and that they should go to a hospital to get him checked. They did that and learned that he was, indeed, deaf. Ploy did not share about her response other than saying "But I feel good because of God give me the child, he's alive, he's healthy, he's not sick, so I feel very happy."

Her story mirrors other participants, both deaf and hearing, that, despite the initial reaction to the news, ultimately, there was joy that the child was born healthy. However, waiting until the child is two to get him evaluated also points to the Maria's potential denial that her child is or may be deaf, just like Ana who went back to Mexico after she was told her child was deaf. Ploy did not talk about her reaction to the initial news. Just that she is happy her son is healthy. This may be because she does not want to share or relive that experience, or because she is viewing her circumstances through her presumably hard life in the refugee camp. There was not anything for Ploy to do to help her son, so she had to find the joy in the situation.

These reactions are framed by the experiences of the parents, their own attitudes on deafness, and the realities of their lives. For the Abebe and Idel Dula, they experienced different reactions based on their life experiences. Not only were Abebe and Idel immigrants from different countries, Ethiopia and Somalia, Abebe came to America while still in high school, so he had experienced more of American life and education than his wife who immigrated after completing grade school. He also had a family member who is hard of hearing. He recalled,

I remember it, but my aunt is hard of hearing. So I was raised around her, so I kind of know. When I found out, I was like, okay, so she's hard of hearing, she's in America, you know, it's different than it is back home. So I accepted it a lot easier, quicker than my wife did. My wife took it a lot harder. She kind of blamed herself, thinking it was her fault, until we went and got some tests done and found out it was genetic and nothing we could have done...Because I've seen

a lot of people who are deaf or hard of hearing and being successful. Here in America, you could be anything and still be successful and not have a hard life, compared to the way it is back home...Here, there's special schools for people who are deaf or hard of hearing or blind. So we knew there were resources out there for us. Well, I figured there were resources out there we could take advantage of, so that's why I wasn't as worried as other people.

The Dula's story illustrates the complexity and the role of life experiences on how people react to different situations. Because Abebe was exposed to deaf people through his aunt and his experiences with her in Ethiopia, he was more aware of opportunities for people with disabilities while in the US. Idel, on the other hand, had not had these experiences, and reacted out of her fear that her child would not have the same opportunities and advantages as a hearing child. Idel based her reaction on what she knew to be true of deaf people in Somalia.

Attitudes toward deafness. The attitudes of individual parents, extended family members, and various cultural systems impacted the initial experiences of the parents on how they responded to the news that their child is deaf.

Each participant both deaf and hearing, representing 10 developing nations around the world, consistently described this negative view of deaf people within their national cultural system. However, how this impacted them varied based on their personal experiences with deafness. The data suggest that the hearing families and the deaf families were impacted differently by their child being deaf. The extended families

of both hearing families and deaf families were also impacted differently and their reactions also impacted the families with the deaf child.

Attitudes toward deafness among hearing families. The hearing families shared about how deaf people are viewed in their COOs. It was negative in all cases. Some of these families reflected this view in their own reaction to learning their child is deaf. They used words such as “normal” implying, either intentionally or not, that they did not view their child as normal, at least not initially. Their views were likely shaped by what they had seen and perceived as the life and opportunities of deaf in their COO. For Abebe, he saw this in his own family. Abebe described the experiences of his hard of hearing auntie in Ethiopia.

...Compared to the way it is back home, where you're viewed differently of the way my auntie was treated differently because she was hard of hearing, she was lower than everybody because it took more time to learn...Because the way the culture looks at it, society looks at it, is like if you have a disability, you are, you know, something is wrong with you. Something is wrong with you. You can't be normal. You can't be part of society because you have this kind of disability. So I just remember seeing a lot of deaf people on the side begging for money because they have no way of earning.

For Abebe, though he had seen the stigma of being deaf in Ethiopia, instead of dwelling on the negative impacts of his daughter's diagnosis, it helped him to accept that his child was hard of hearing and then find resources to help her. He was asked to share what advice he would offer someone from Ethiopia with a deaf or hard of hearing child

planning to migrate to the US. His response shows how he processed the realities in his own family. He said that he would advise them to just accept that their child is deaf and move on from there, not to dwell on trying to change the fact. He said that, instead of praying and asking God to change it, that you should just accept it because it would not change.

This advice is interesting as it shows through his choice of words that the news that your child is deaf or hard of hearing is not “good” news, but that the best course of action is to just accept it and move on. Abebe shared that, in his schooling experience in Ethiopia, you really just learn the Koran and many people turn to faith to try to change situations. Also, many people in Ethiopia and other developing countries (Babu, 2008) as reflected in this study, believe that when you have a child with a disability, it is a punishment from God. So, therefore, asking God to change it may seem the logical choice for them. However, he did not see it this way and did not think others should either.

Halgan Shire, the mother of a deaf child, also noted the lack of support for deaf people in Somalia. “There's nothing in Somalia. Once they see the person is deaf, they don't take care of it, they don't do anything.” This was also the case for the Hernandez family, from Mexico. Carlos Hernandez talked about the limited resources and opportunities for deaf people in Mexico. In his response, he notices the irony that deaf people are not given language or opportunity to learn but then are rejected for being uneducated and not being able to communicate. Carlos also recognized the opportunities that living in America brought to his family and his deaf child.

...It's very fortunate that our daughter is well here. But in Mexico, there are no programs and people with physical impairments, they have to live like that for the rest of their life and they cannot communicate with other people. They don't receive any kind of help, you know, like teaching, learning, education. Maybe half of the population gets some kind of help, you know, like learning the language sign, the sign language. But most of them are kind of doomed to live a life like that because they don't have any kind of access to resource. You know, it's kind of silly in some ways. Sometimes we make fun of them because they cannot communicate with the rest of people. And many people treat them or believe they are like kind of crazy because they haven't received any kind of education and they don't know how to communicate with normal people. Usually, you know, in Mexico, any person who has any kind of physical impairment; they don't see them as normal.

The García family, migrating from Mexico, from the same Mexican state as the Hernandez family, talked about their attitude toward deaf people stemming from the larger, national cultural system, and then how they struggled with accepting that their child's deafness and its meaning for his future. In this situation, as with Dula family, the mother and the father had different reactions to the news and reality of their child's being deaf and what that meant for the child. Jose García also hinted that there is a difference in the perception of deaf people in the rural areas of the country versus urban areas. While he is positive in his encouragement to the mother, Maria, his view of deafness is still as a disability, but one that is not as bad as some other disabilities.

As I told you before, basically we come from a rural area. We are not from the city. If someone has a sick kid, you see the whole person and you hear people saying, he's useless. They cannot hear; they cannot talk. That's why my wife didn't want to attend the school, because we come from a rural area and we have that mentality. She couldn't accept, how is it possible that a kid is only going to use sign language to communicate? But I always had this positive thinking. I was telling her, don't lose hope. Maybe one day he'll be able to speak. His only problem is that he cannot hear and he cannot speak. The rest is completely normal. He doesn't depend on us to go to the bathroom or to eat. In that sense, he's normal. Some kids are really dependent on their parents for everything, to eat, everything. And thanks goddess not like that.

His narrative highlights that, because of their experiences in the rural areas of their country, Maria did not want to have their son attend a school for the deaf here in America. She was fearful that this would close him into a life of helplessness and using sign language instead of speaking. Jose, because he was able to understand her sorrow and fears, was able to help bring positive thinking.

Attitudes toward deafness among deaf families. The families with deaf parents were also shaped by their experiences growing up deaf in their COO. As a child and, for some, a young adult, they lived this deprivation and rejection as a reality, receiving sub-par services and being stigmatized. As adults and now parents of their own deaf children, they experience it again when they travel back to their COO, or interact with local friends from their COO, or even within the extended members of their family. Adama painted a

reality of deafness in his COO, Somalia. He pointed out that, while the government publically proclaims that deaf people have rights, it is not necessarily practiced in daily life. His story is simple and powerful as what he explains touches on ways people view deaf and how he, personally, responds. Adama referenced how, when you tell people you are deaf, they will “become very angry and start yelling at you. They know you are deaf but they don’t care.” He cites other reactions to people learning you are deaf such as laughing at you, or taking pity that you are cursed. Adama pointed out that, while the government claims they are committed to the rights and needs of the deaf, that there is no action on this. Adama discussed assumptions people make about you. Some assume you have a mental illness in addition to being deaf. Or, that you are uneducated.

Sometimes on the bus, I will write something down to communicate. The person will say, “Wow. How do you write?” I tell them that I sign and I learned the alphabet at the deaf school. And we will exchange communication. It is important to spread the information everywhere. Many people just bypass the deaf school and don’t know what it is.

Adama revealed the negative and dismissive attitudes and assumptions that some Malians have about deaf people. The negative attitudes are not only from the hearing people though. Adama went on to talk about oppressive attitudes from the deaf people in his COO and how this impacted him when he became the father of a deaf baby. Though he was happy, other deaf people from Mali did not respond positively. He recalled visiting the school for the deaf after his daughter was born.

But when I went to the deaf school [and told them she was deaf], they said, “What? Deaf? Sorry?” I asked why they would say that they pity me? You are deaf yourself and people look down on you for that. Why would you not be positive? You are proud of signing, right? I explained about American Deaf culture that when a deaf baby is born, it is exciting. That is how the deaf typically are, but in my home it is different. I learned that some were fine with it, so were not.

Chathura, another deaf father, had a similar experience with the deaf community in Sri Lanka. He, too, was shocked at the negative reaction of other deaf people. “...A lot of people put us down for having a deaf baby. I remember when our first daughter was born, the one we brought here. Deaf would say, your child is born deaf because God is punishing you.” Chathura mentioned this negative reaction again later in the interview when remembering the experience of sharing the news that his daughter is deaf.

Discrimination is tough. A lot of the deaf community still discriminates. I think of my friend. We grew up together. His child is hearing, my child is deaf. He says, “Yes. My child is hearing, I am lucky! Your child is deaf? I feel bad for you.” It really makes me feel badly. Wow! Those Sri Lankan deaf people hope they have hearing children, period. Not deaf. For example, one deaf [Sri Lankan who lives in the US] had a hearing child and was very excited. I was very insulted. We are from the same country. You should not say that. That's tough.

The experiences of these deaf parents showed a difference in perception of deafness among deaf people in their COOs and the US. This could be attributed to quality

of life and opportunity. All of the participants noted the lack of opportunities for everyone, and especially deaf, in their COO when compared with the US. The attitudes toward deafness in their COO and within the deaf community from their COO, were not the only attitudes that these families have to face as they parent their deaf child. The reactions of their extended families were powerful as well.

Attitudes toward deafness among extended family. It was not easy for these families to have to navigate being a parent to a deaf child in light of the attitudes toward deaf within their larger, national cultural system. They were also impacted on a much more closer level, their families. Both deaf and hearing parents in the study shared memories and experiences of how their own parents and extended families reacted to the news that their child was deaf.

Abebe talked about how his mother will not acknowledge that her granddaughter is deaf. He had earlier referenced that his mother suggested praying the deafness away. For years, she continued to respond that the child will be fine. Regardless, Abebe gave her updates on his daughter's progress and it seemed to be helping his mother accept the reality of her granddaughter being deaf.

My mom didn't believe me. She was, oh, she's going to be fine, just give her time, she'll hear just fine. She used to say that. Then like when she started school when she was two and a half years old, so when we went out, that's when I told my mom she would start school, my mom said, no, she doesn't need to go to that kind of school, just give her a couple of years and she can go to regular school. I said okay, but I still got her started in school. But now she's -- before she didn't

say anything anymore. When I give her an update [on my daughter], you know, she's doing this, she's talking. She says, "Okay. She's fine."

However, for the Pereras, as deaf parents, their reaction to the response of the child's hearing grandparents was much more emotional and personal. When the grandparents were trying to arrange for CIs for their deaf grandbabies, it became personal to the Pereras as deaf individuals. They felt that, if their parents did not accept the deafness of grandchildren it implied they saw deafness as a limitation in spite of the many successes of their now grown deaf children. The Pereras were proud to be deaf and proud to parent deaf children. Chathura and his wife felt that neither they nor their children needed to have CIs to be successful. It even caused the parents to react in ways that are not considered respectful within the larger, national culture. The Pereras talked back to their parents and refused to accept their advice. Chathura shared his experience with his parents, while filled with emotion at the memory.

My father went ahead and called a British company for a doctor to come to our home, to my uncle's home, so he came. We had no idea about it. So they said, Mom and Dad agreed; you need to go meet the doctor. I said, I don't understand, the doctor? So, I went. I was furious! The doctor planned to go ahead with a CI for my daughter. We argued back and forth. I don't want it. I don't want it. I don't want it. Before we went to the US, I had gone to the US and my wife was pregnant at that time, and my mother kept saying, Go ahead, sign, sign, sign. We want her to hurry up and get the CI so she can become hearing. We don't want her to be deaf. I said, NO. she will write, she is smart! I kept arguing and said it is the

wrong time. She is only 1 and I don't care, I already have been working with her on writing. We have been working together and it has been very successful." We continued arguing. My father said, "Look at the computer. The doctor showed us that CI help kids to speak well." So, my father and mother were very direct. I said, "Yes, I know, but speaking one sentence, just one sentence, five or six words and everyone is so excited. But, no! That is just your expectation." Mom said, "Yes. I want that. I want speaking." We continued to go back and forth. It was very difficult. My wife, the two of us, we WON'T. EVERYONE wanted it. My sister wanted it, too. I couldn't believe it, my deaf sister. My deaf brother also said, "Listen to mom and dad. I said, "no". There was so much tension.

It was a very hard time for Cathura because he was going against the wishes of his parents while remaining firm for what he thought was best for his daughter. At the same time, he was feeling attacked as a deaf person who signed and did not have a CI.

Navigating attitudes toward deafness is highly complicated and even moreso for immigrant families with deaf children. The deaf families with deaf parents were not exempt from this experience and it is possible that they felt the oppression and negativity even more because the reactions were a reflection on themselves as deaf people. The attitudes and experiences of the families, both deaf and hearing, shaped how participants parented their deaf children from learning of the child's being deaf to choosing sign language, to enrolling them in school. It helps to understand the frame for the choices participants made. Though some of the extended families and friends may have negative

attitudes toward deafness, they still supported their children and grandchildren and were a vital source of support for these families.

Importance of Family Support

Support is a vital factor in the transitions faced by immigrant families. As they make their new home in the US, there are many new experiences and hurdles for them, made lighter by those around them. This support is also a big part of their experience navigating parenting across multiple cultures, particularly with a deaf child. This system of support looked different according to each family's story. Some had relatives close by and were very connected while others with relatives who were geographically close were less connected in terms of support. Some families relied heavily on family back in their COO, while others relied on a network of friends. And, some families reported that they had little to no support. One common theme for most of the families was a lack of support *in* the US.

For most families in this study, family support is a key factor in the experiences and decisions they make. For most participants, family and friends helped them (or discouraged them) on their immigration journey. They offered advice on parenting a deaf child. They offered support for the families while they are living in the US. The level of support participants received shaped how these parents navigated and experienced parenting with a deaf child in the US.

Family support impacted the immigration experiences of the participants. The families had many different experiences immigrating to the US and learning to navigate life in the US. The Ploy's were the only family in which the parents migrated to the US

together. They made the journey from a refugee camp with their four children. The Perera's, Toure's and Shire's had one parent come first and the second parent join them later. The Dula, Hernandez, García, Pérez, and Martínez families met their partners after arriving to the US. Chathura Perera and Adama Toure came as college students. Abebe Dula, Luis Pérez, and Rosa Martínez came while they were still in grade school (so they were essentially raised here). They traveled from various nations and situations and in search of better opportunities for themselves and their children. Regardless of when and how participants arrived in the US, they all relied on family and friends to help them make the journey and adjust to their new lives.

Participants with close friends geographically close by to help them out, relied on these friends and family for advice, financial help, and emotional support. Adama came to America to start his college education and his wife joined him later and their daughter was born while they were living in the US. Adama noted having friends in various places around the US to whom he could reach out for financial support or for a place to spend the holiday breaks. When asked if he feels like he has a support system in the US, Adama replied,

Yes, and a little bit no. Before I came to Gallaudet, I had connections here that were waiting for me to come. For example, one friend drove two days to come and see me when I arrived here. I was like, "Whoa!" But he said, "No, I am here to support you. American life is not easy. Every month, a different family from Virginia will come and visit me. On Thanksgiving, Christmas, and other holidays, I go to their home. I have a friend in New York that is currently staying with me

to go to the Embassy looking for sponsorship. We see each other every three months. She supports me sometimes if I need something or helps me understand American culture. I have a lot of people supporting me. For example, as I said before, when the baby was born and we needed money, they gave us money. If we didn't have that support, it would be even more frustrating. Recently, I was able to work hard and now have insurance for my wife. So, things are much better now.

These friends offer not only moral support, but also physical support. They also rely on these friends for help with childcare, financial help, and other daily support.

For Luis it is his father who was very involved in the family life. He cared for their child one day per week while Elisa and Luis work. The grandfather is deaf and at the parent's request, he also is supporting the multi-lingual language development of his grandson by signing only the signed language from his COO, Peruvian Sign Language.

The García family also said that they are able to rely on family for support. Both Maria and Jose have family members local to them and who support them in emergencies and with childcare. Joseph noted his lack of involvement in the Guinean community, though he lives near many Guineans. However, he talked about a friend he relied heavily upon to get his son a CI and get him out of Guinea. He relied on a friend in Germany to provide housing and assistance while his child underwent surgery to get a CI. He was able to get funding for the surgery and his friend allowed him to stay for free during the whole process.

While some families emphasized ways they got support, more families emphasized a lack of family and friend support. For these families, the lack of support was felt very much because it was quite different than what they experienced in their COO. The Dula's said that they have family close by and admitted that they would be likely to help them if they asked for it, yet they did not ask for help. Abebe said,

Like I -- if I call my cousins or my aunties and say, you know, can you watch my kids, they will do it, but I don't wish that -- I think it's too much... You feel like you're a burden to them so you try not to do it as much. There are times when I've called them to watch the kids and they'll watch them for me. But it's different here [in the US].

He noted that it would be like a burden to ask for help, when within his COO, he would not think twice to ask for help from family. He shared about what support looks like in his COO and how different it is than what they experience in the US. When asked about the difference, he explained that, in his COO, family, including extended, live and stay together.

Carlos also shared the difference between the US and his COO when it comes to support. Though at other times he discussed the benefits of living in the US he also saw life in the US as challenging:

Oh, no, in Mexico, it's different... Most people, as I told you before, don't have much education. But they have a big heart. If something happens to anyone, even if that person doesn't have, you know, the finances, they help. In so many

ways, giving food, being present, being helpful. You know, here, you are on your own. I think in that sense, Mexico is much better.

He makes a strong statement when he said, “But they have a big heart.” It implies that the US has something to offer for education, but is lacking in heart in comparison to Mexicans.

Family and family support is very important to most of these families, yet they sacrifice it and face living life in a new country and parenting in isolation compared to what they would be in their COO. In the US, where they need to work harder and longer to make ends meet and raise their family, they are left far more isolated than they would be had they stayed in their COO. Joseph Diallo shared a unique reason for living with less dependency on family and friend support. He commented that having a deaf child separated them from the community.

I live in a community with Guinean people. Our family stays together. It is partly because of the CI. We all stay together. There is a large community here but we only get together when it is a holiday or celebration like Ramadan.

He did not specify the reason having a deaf son impacted their engagement in the larger community. Joseph’s comments implied that the family stays together because his son is deaf. However, they were more isolated from the larger community because of his son being deaf.

The advice of family and friends was directly tied to their own attitudes toward deafness. Support from their families, propelled participants forward, enabling them to come to the US. In some cases, the support remained and helped them continue through

parenting in tangible ways, for other families, being a parent to a deaf child and living in the US separated them from the level of support they had known back home.

Navigating Choices for Language and Education

While families processed the reality that their child was deaf, their next step was to seeking out options, both therapy related and early intervention or schooling, for their children as they moved forward. This began another journey where they counted on support and advice as they sought and considered options (if any were presented) for their young deaf child. The advice came from extended family, friends or the community, and various professionals including speech therapists, the state Department of Education, teachers, and the school for the deaf. Participants reported struggling to understand what services and resources were available for their deaf children.

The deaf families navigated the system slightly differently than participants who were hearing. This was likely because they already knew they wanted to enroll their children in a program that used and valued ASL. What varied for them was the families who immigrated after completing grade school were not aware of existing resources initially compared to the families who immigrated near the end of grade school and completed grade school in the US. However, even for the deaf families who immigrated after grade school, they were able to learn about resources and build navigational capital for their deaf children through their involvement in the Deaf community.

Two of the deaf fathers, Chathura and Adama, immigrated to the US after grade school. Both of the fathers reported that they were unaware that there was a school for the Deaf near them that served deaf and hard of hearing children and their families from

birth. Chathura was a university student in America while his wife remained in Sri Lanka with their deaf daughter. He found out about the school from another college student on campus. Chanthura was really excited to learn about it and worked extra hard so that he could bring his family here and his daughter could enroll.

However, once his family arrived, he was not sure about taking his daughter to school so young. "I told the [my daughter's] teachers, "Hold on. Wait until she is five." They responded, "NO! No, Don't." I learned that [my daughter's school] had no problem with me. They provided me with so much information. I was shocked. It was different than what I knew."

Adama, also a university student, learned about the school from someone he met at a deaf event. He was asked if his daughter was deaf and then told about the school and the Parent Infant Program. Soon after, he learned that his daughter was indeed deaf and he enrolled her in the school. He was fortunate to be part of the deaf community and, therefore, learned about the local school for the deaf that has a Parent Infant Program. This way his daughter and family could get started with a support team of professional teachers of the deaf and other service providers right away.

The other two deaf families had attended secondary school in the US, so they knew many of the resources available to them and to their children and how to access these resources. Even for these two deaf families, while they knew the choices available to them, choosing the right program for their deaf children was not simple and straightforward. Elisa Pérez shared how they chose their son's current school, but that they are keeping future options open.

We decided to go to [our current school for the deaf]. We have many friends who have gone through the PIP program there who loved it. So, we decided our next step would be to go [there]. After that, who knows? I did tell him [the father] that I don't want to limit our options only to schools for the deaf. I wanted to keep our options open. Luckily, in this area, there are many different options like mainstream with an interpreter. One thing, we are not interested in is getting a CI or an oral language approach. Other than that, we are open to the various options. I told him that I have learned to advocate for my daughter and myself to ensure that I have interpreters for the PTA meetings and am included in everything. Now, with [my deaf son], I feel I have double the work to be sure we have all the resources that we need. It is a different experience than being the deaf parent of a hearing child.

Rosa initially enrolled her daughter in a program for the deaf within a public school because there was no option of a deaf school in the state of Nebraska, where she was living at the time. Ultimately, Rosa decided to move to a different state so that her daughter could get the education and language that her mother wanted for her. She moved because the public school program was not using American Sign Language, but, rather, a sign system called Signed Exact English (SEE). Rosa did not want her daughter to use SEE, but the school was firm that SEE was the language they used. She decided to move to another state so her daughter could attend a deaf school that used ASL.

While navigating schools, programs, and services is challenging for any family, the deaf families were spared the time spent waiting for professionals to inform them of

choices. This meant that their children were able to begin receiving services, and most importantly, language, right away. Many of the hearing immigrant families with deaf children were not so fortunate and had to search for resources available to them, on addition to navigating the choices if there were presented.

Navigating choices for language and education for hearing families. The hearing families in this study had a more complex journey to finding and enrolling their children in their current school. Some families were left to find resources on their own, while others were directed to some form of early intervention service or program. Ploy initially had her child enrolled in local mainstream program that has a program to support deaf and hard of hearing children. She was directed to this program upon arriving in the US. Ploy was not informed of any school or intervention service for her child from the pediatrician. Someone from her immigration office directed her to the first early intervention program for her son. It was an oral program. Ploy then found out about another school for deaf children from another mother. Ploy asked the school about this program and they helped her enroll.

One of American woman, mother said, “You can ask the school how to register in this school.” And then I find out from one of the teachers, [an] American teacher. The teacher also cannot speak. She is deaf teacher. One of [mainstream school] schoolteachers contacted her [for me].

This information must have been valuable to her, something she wished she had known earlier, because, when asked what advice she would give a family moving to the US with a young deaf child, she quickly mentioned that she would tell them about school and pass

on the knowledge she has learned through her experiences and the advice of those around her.

And I would try to advise them about first education...now I know a lot because of living here a couple years. That's why I know a lot of things. And then I would advise them. First thing is about the school, the deaf school, how to go to school and I can bring them and contact school for them. But I would try to let someone know and then I can help them.

Halgan also talked about how she came to enroll her deaf children in the school for the deaf. Upon arrival in the US, her deaf children went to a mainstream school. They expressed frustration because they could not understand what was being said while in school all day. When she asked the school, they helped her find the school for the deaf. There, they learned ASL and were able to feel and be successful.

We took them to the normal [mainstream] school, and kids kept complaining they couldn't understand the teacher, what they're talking about. So we went to the school and we told them, and then they looked for us for a deaf school and we took them there. They learned the sign language and everybody was, you know, impressed and said oh, my God, [they are] learning really fast and all that. And now, they [are] doing great.

The Hernandez family, though they received many services for their daughter early on, were not informed about the school and enrolled on their own. They felt time was wasted while they waited for the case worker to get back to them about schooling options for their daughter.

Before she was four years old, she was getting some therapy. My son had a speech problem. He was two years old. He didn't speak much. And I called someone to get some therapy for him. But he passed all the tests. But then they looked at my daughter. She was still very little. And they tested her. She was five months old. And they gave her occupational therapy, physical therapy, all what she needed. Until four years old, she was getting occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech therapy. And after that, it was kind of difficult because they [said they could] offered us a special program for her. And we kept waiting, but we never had an answer. Especially the physical therapist, he advised us to look for a school. And since we were waiting for that help that we never got, and we lived in this area, we came by ourselves to the school... We talked with the supervisor about the situation. They gave us an interview, and she was evaluated. They decided she qualified to enter into the school. And there was some paperwork that had to be done, you know, and in the end, she was admitted. But we came by ourselves to the school.

The physical therapist informed the Hernandez's that there was a school in their area, but then the doctor never followed-up with information for enrolling their child. When she aged out of early intervention at the age of four, they were left on their own.

Yeah, the physical therapist told us the school was located in our area. They told us they would look for a school for us, but that never happened. You know, the time for her to attend the school was approaching, so we had to make a decision. For a while, she was with nothing, no therapists at all. Yeah, because she was

covered until she was three years old. The case worker never answered. The people from the school needed an authorization from her for our daughter to be admitted to the school, and she never answered.

Participants were persistent and did not give up finding an option for their children, even amidst a system that was less than available.

The García family found out about the school through their early intervention service providers. They were reluctant to place their child in a signing school, but after seeing slow progress with the early intervention service in their home, they decided it was a good choice for him. The García's were given the information and able to make a choice that they felt was best for their son, though it was not an easy choice to make. Jose recalled that they were eager to enroll their child, but even though they were happy to have the services, they were nervous about enrolling him in a sign program. After visiting the program, they saw some kids talking and it relieved their fears.

Joseph was also very ambitious and eager to get services for his son. He did not wait around for services to be offered. His son was 2.5 when he was diagnosed in Guinea. The doctor there was not very helpful, as far as the father was concerned. "We were referred to an ENT (ear, nose, and throat specialist). The ENT told us to wait until he was five to get testing, but I believed that was too late." From there, Joseph used connections in Germany to get his son a cochlear implant. He talked about the experience of getting the surgery. After the surgery, he brought his son with him to the US and he immediately went to the state Department of Education to ask about schooling options for his son. Joseph recounted his experiences finding and choosing a school program for his child.

When we moved to the United States, I looked for schools. I asked the New York Department of Education and I was told he might qualify for special needs education. I then came to the deaf school and had a meeting to talk about their program.

He shared how the school helped him choose the program that was the best fit for his son. Choices for school or school program options are often complicated because they are typically marked by their language use for teaching and learning. There are choices, ranging from oral only programs to bilingual programs using ASL and English. Some programs use a mix of oral language and signed language (not ASL, just signs). It was hard for all parents to know what program would be the best fit for their children and their families. This father struggled with the choice, but meeting with the school and sharing his concerns helped him make the choice.

I had two choices for programs. I talked to the teachers about the use of speech and sign language. I was not sure he would be able to talk. The speech people said it would be possible to help him with speech and sign. Before, I was concerned that if he signed, he would not speak. The school convinced me that ASL is another language and can help him to learn speech.

The Kirui family did not know where to go or what to do for the young deaf child in their family. The older (young adult) sister, Aasiya, shared her memory of trying to find services or options to provide language for her young brother. She felt responsible for helping her family find the best resources for him.

So I think that was, I would say, the first two years, we didn't know what to do, we didn't know where to go. As a sister, I feel like that's where I -- because I guess I had the means to find out. Because my school didn't offer any languages, I didn't know where to start. But as a family, that was our biggest obstacle to overcome, where to start. And when we found out about [our current] deaf school and how they're actually able to accept kids younger than five, we didn't even know about that. So language was a big barrier to overcome.

They started off with services in the home. All the while, they continued to look for a better option for their young deaf family member. Haweeyo Kirui, the mother, recalled the process.

So the beginning, my child was at home and I used to get assistance, come over and try to help his situation...But then I find out (about) the school and I switched to here. I was living in St. Paul, so I moved to Minneapolis. So after he was, while he was having the house assessment, I took him to a child care center or child school.

Aasiya interjected to clarify her mother's recollection of their experience. She added that they had learned when he was two and a half that he was also autistic. They moved to St. Paul and enrolled him in his current school.

While they are now happy with his current placement, as with many of the families, it was not easy for them to navigate the system and resources to get to this point. Haweeyo shared that she had to look for resources on her own and Aasiya added that it is

really hard and frustrating. She noted that, when you are searching for resources that provide the child with language (signed language), there is a deficit in the system.

Haweeyo: So from beginning, I was having my own going to find out information. I didn't really find help. The interventions and other things that were going on with my child. So I did that. I did my own intervention.

Aasiya: That mainly had to do with, I mean, the program mainly was to come to our home and try to play with him and stuff like that. Personally, when you want your child to learn language, they didn't help. Basically at the same time, we didn't know where to start so that in itself was hard. To begin with, I think it's a defect that now that I'm learning sign language, like a lot of the programs that are around for deaf people -- or not for deaf people, I mean, there are a lot of things done for deaf people, but the main thing, like language, I have friends who want to -- who are studying speech...but they're not learning American Sign Language. I'm like, you are going to help deaf people, why are you not. So that in itself is a defect in the system.

Through her experiences, Haweeyo has herself become a resource for the community to help immigrant parents with young deaf children learn about the school and the resources available to them. The mutual friend who arranged my interview with her informed me that she was the “go to” person for the immigrant families in the school. Through the international community, families are often referred to her for advice. After our interview, she shared that many of the international families within the school assume that she is an employee of the school and call the school looking for her. She seemed

genuinely happy to be able to help other families navigate the school and other services for their deaf child as she continued to learn herself.

These immigrant parents reflected on the ongoing experiences as parents, navigating life in America and navigating parenting with a deaf child. The order this happened varied for different families, but the complexity of the daily experiences and choices was real for all of them. Participants relied heavily on their communities for advice and support and their communities grew through parenting a deaf child to include professionals providing services to their child and their family as well as other parents of deaf children. Sometimes, these experiences required them to be assertive and proactive when advice or direction was not given or when they felt they were not getting what their children needed.

The choices the parents made for the education of their deaf children impacted their home as all of these parents, at the time of the interviews, had their children enrolled intentionally in schools or school programs that use ASL as a language of instruction. This means that their child was learning a whole new language, ASL. For some of the hearing families, that meant changing their perception of deafness and what their hopes were for their young deaf child. This shift was highlighted in some of the interviews and will be discussed in the next section as the school, specifically the teachers, played an important role in this process.

Parenthood and Family Engagement

Parenting is a complex journey for all parents. For immigrant families, it is complicated by raising your child in a new country, often without the family, friend, and

community support they would receive in their COO. School engagement is one aspect of parenting. As discussed in the previous section, this includes choosing schools and providing education outside of school as well. Each family made this choice based on several factors, but all of the participants chose what they thought was a good school for their children. For each family, what makes a school “good” looks different, also what it means to educate your child at home looks different.

This is important when looking at family engagement. It impacts how the family views their role in the school and how they engage in their child’s education and how their engagement impacted their experiences and choices as parents. The following sections will highlight the family’s parenting experiences as a result of their engagement in their deaf child’s education. This includes 1) redefining how they view their deaf child, 2) navigating language learning, 3) supporting their child at home, and 4) the role of the school and the role of the family in educating the child.

Choosing ASL. As noted in the previous section, all of the participants were navigating complex journeys as immigrants and as parents of young deaf children. For the hearing families, deciding to place their child in a school or program that uses ASL means the consideration of adding a new language, and a new culture in addition to navigating the cultural system in America and American education. For some, it also meant viewing their child through a different lens. Their engagement with the school was a key factor in this process. As stated in the section above, for some of these parents, making the choice to have their child learn ASL was a big step for them as they, at one point, believed that signing would hinder their speech and language development, or that

using ASL was connected to their child being different than everyone else. It was a shift from focusing on their children learning to speak and hear to accepting their children as deaf, and believing that ASL is a language that will enable them to learn many things, including speech.

Maria shared her thoughts on their son using ASL and how that helped her realize that he is just a typical child with a lot of potential.

Some people, I mean people like him, that they learn the sign language, can, you know, achieve a lot. Even more than normal people. Now I'm less anxious. And I realize that he's smarter than his sister. For example, when he does his homework on his own, it's like any other kid.

Joseph shared that the school helped him to understand that ASL is another language that will help him learn other languages, including spoken languages. “Before, I was concerned that if he signed, he would not speak. The school convinced me that ASL is another language and can help him to learn speech.”

Now that his son has been attending the school and uses ASL, his father recognizes how it adds to the languages he already knows, “Now, he knows ASL, English, Tulani, and French.” He commented that his goal for his child is to continue learning speech but retaining and using ASL. “All kids need to [finish school] for a better life. He uses ASL and speech. So how do we intensify this and not lose sign language? It is step by step.” He commented specifically on ASL as he views it as a language and culture. When speaking about ASL and deaf people he commented, “That’s the proficient language. It is the world like our world.”

One of the deaf families also shared their experience in choosing ASL for their children. Chathura reported that his wife grew up in Sri Lanka and attended a school that taught lipreading. When their daughter was born, she stayed in Sri Lanka for a few years and attended the same school with the same teacher. Chathura recounted his experience at seeing his daughter and the other children at the school.

When my daughter was [at school in Sri Lanka], she had to go for lipreading training. All of the children who were deaf, hard of hearing, handicapped, were all together. My daughter did go with those students. The teacher was wonderful. The teacher used to be my wife's teacher and taught her lipreading. My daughter thought about her classmates. She was only about three to four years old. No, I remember, she was three years old...The teacher said she was very smart and that we were blessed. I realized that lipreading was not worth it. Signing helped you to learn concepts and to have knowledge. It was very inspiring. I understood the importance of language acquisition.

For other parents, particularly the deaf participants, finding a program that used ASL was imperative and a non-negotiable factor for their child in for education setting. Elisa Pérez shared their family's plans for their child's education, "One thing, we are not interested in getting a CI or oral language."

After talking about her frustration with their local mainstream school not signing ASL, Rosa shared her reaction and thoughts on how deaf children should learn. She shared, "It is important to recognize, if a deaf child is frustrated [from lack of access to language], to move the child to a deaf school to learn and grow." She decided to move to

a different state so her daughter could attend a school where she could use ASL both academically and socially.

Aasiya also shared how they were not happy that many of the early intervention service providers did not sign and were not helping her brother learn sign language. She commented, “Personally, when you want your child to learn language, they didn't help.” She went on to explain that it is a big problem among service providers that they do not point you toward programs that offer ASL so the young deaf child can develop early language skills.

Haweeyo echoed this when she shared the advice she has offered to other immigrant families with young deaf children. She emphasized language access as the top priority. She noted:

[I would tell them to go] for the class American Sign Language. [And to] take your child to school. To communicate. That the parent go to class as well. Have that example... We're supposed to be able to communicate. It's better that way.

Throughout her interview, she mentioned language and communication as key components in her journey as a parent of a deaf child. She and her daughter are actively involved in learning ASL, working with their child who is deaf, and being advocates for others in the same situation.

All of these families, through their varied journeys, chose ASL for their children at school. Though many of the hearing parents ultimately wished for their deaf children to speak and use spoken language, they recognized the value of their children learning and using ASL to get their education. ASL was a factor, for some families, in changing

how they viewed their child. They transitioned from a view of “disabled” to “normal” thanks to language access.

Language use in the home. Although all of the participants chose to place their deaf child in an ASL program, the ASL proficiency of the families and the languages spoken in the home varied greatly. Many of the participants in this study maintain the language from their COO in their homes. For some, they are passing these languages on to their children. Most of the families are still learning English, though some have been in the US for many years now. These same families also added ASL as a language in the home. Each family was asked what language they use to communicate in the home. Some of the answers varied according to whom they were speaking, but each family used more than one language.

The Pérez family, a deaf talked about their decision to add LSP (Peruvian Sign Language) as a language for their young deaf child. The mother is not fluent in LSP, so the child’s deaf paternal grandfather and the father use LSP with the child. The family even has language goals for their deaf child. Elisa recalled filling out a Family Language Planning form developed by a team of early childhood education professionals to help families become intentional about the language they use with their deaf child.

We (Luis and I) had talked about our language goals, but to fill out the [family language planning] form and write them all down helped. That’s when we decided for his father to sign LSP. He (the grandfather) said that sometimes he may forget or get confused, but we said that was fine. He is exposed to ASL from us (Luis and I) and everyone else around him and printed English. So he (Luis)

can teach him Spanish, and my daughter knows Spanish as well, and then Peruvian Sign Language from his grandfather. [The baby] is getting older now, so we need to be practicing with him.

The Perera family also reported being very intentional about teaching language to their deaf children. While the parents used some ASL and some signs from Sri Lanka with one another, they use ASL with their children full time at home. Chathura shared that he is very intentional about exposing his daughter to ASL and language.

When I am having a conversation, she watches and sometimes, if she does not understand, I explain it to her. Not all parents do that. They prefer to have private conversations. I say no, go ahead and tell them. It reminds me of when I was little. My parents would be talking and I would ask my dad what they were talking about. He could sign so he would just give me a little bit of information. I would ponder that information and try to figure out what they were talking about. Then I would just forget about it. (28:07) It is the same thing. I know that my daughter wants to be included. She is welcome to watch any of my conversations any time. Even when it is private. The important thing is that she learn language.

Adama and his deaf wife use a mixture of ASL and Malian Sign Language in their home, though they have a goal of using ASL. Since he is out all day taking classes, he is learning ASL faster than his wife, who stays home and takes care of their daughter. He stated that he uses ASL when he is home with her, but when she does not understand, he will use Mali sign with her to clarify. Their daughter was still very young at the time of the interview, but he stated that they use ASL with her.

Haweeyo said that she uses both ASL and her native Somali language at home with her children. She has recently started learning ASL since they have been in the US for two years. Before coming to the US, they used Somali only to communicate in their home.

I use the sign language, the one that you learn in America, and I use my home native language at the same time from all the way back home in Somalia, the way I used to communicate with them. So all of the children will understand both languages.

Similar to Haweeyo, Ploy stated that she uses the Hmong language with her children. She uses hand gestures as well. “I try to talk in Hmong language, in our own language, and also show like hands, like a symbol or something like that.”

The García family reported that they use Spanish at home with their children. The Hernandez family also speaks Spanish as the primary language in their home. Carlos Hernandez reported that their daughter’s speech and hearing are improving, so they mainly speak Spanish with her, though they use some sign. As her ability to hear and speech improves, they sign less and speak Spanish more with her.

Abebe stated that they use mainly spoken English in the home; even between him and his wife. He admitted that he does not speak his native tongue, Oromo, with his children as much as he thinks he should. He really only speaks Oromo with his extended family. This could be due, in part, to the fact that he and his wife immigrated from different countries, so English is their shared language.

While English and ASL were used as the primary language in some of the homes, some of these immigrant families used their native tongue to communicate in the home, regardless of their child's hearing abilities. However, this is not necessarily to preserve their language and culture, but rather, they are fluent in this language and not in English, so it allows them to communicate freely and maintain their relationship with their families and community.

Learning ASL. While many of the hearing families used the language from their COO to communicate in the home, they all chose ASL for their children. All participants decided to place their deaf children in a school or program that uses ASL, but not all families reported using ASL as a primary language or one of the languages they use in the home. Regardless, of how much ASL they use in their homes, many of the families commented on how they are learning ASL or want to learn ASL. Many of the school programs provide ASL classes for the parents. Some parents are able to take advantage of this, and some are not, for various reasons. Some parents reported that it is their deaf child who teaches them ASL.

Some families are not able to attend the ASL courses offered by the school for a variety of reasons. Carlos stated that they are unable to attend the ASL classes at the school, but that they would inquire about taking a class on the day the father is off. He infers that he is interested in taking a course and will follow-up to see if he can take one offered on his day off. Though he is only off one day a week. It is possible this would be a big financial and practical hardship for him and the family. However, they reported

that, as they and their daughter learn ASL, they are able to see how much she really knows.

But little by little, we're getting back to normal. We have found that our daughter being deaf doesn't affect us at all. On the contrary, it helps us. Yeah, because we are learning things like sign language that we didn't know before. And you know, we are very surprised and excited because we think that she doesn't know certain things, but she does know them. And then we learn from her.

Abebe said that he used the signs that he knows with his daughter and sought opportunities to learn more signs from visiting the school or from asking others who know ASL. He took a class at the school the previous semester and enjoyed it, but provided some feedback about how it could be more accessible and beneficial.

They [the school] offer -- they did offer a class last semester, like every Tuesday for sign class, which was nice. But the person that was teaching it, she didn't speak, all she did was sign, so I think that kind of made it harder. It was okay, I learned a lot of things, but we couldn't go every week because we had things scheduled, but yeah, they do offer us stuff and I know they're working on a video, like video chat lesson. They're going to start working on that.

The Hernandez family also said they used to take classes at the school, but now they are learning from their deaf daughter. They mentioned that the school charges for the classes, but that they are cheap. Carlos said,

[Our daughter] also teaches us. We were taking sign classes. Not right now. We were taking sign classes at the school... We had to pay, but it's practically nothing.

They did not say why they stopped taking the courses. It could be money or the time commitment, or the fact that their daughter was communicating better at home. Either way, Carlos' comments, however, show that they were still learning ASL from their daughter.

Some of the parents were able to attend ASL classes at their child's school. They continue to learn from their child as well.

Joseph was learning ASL from his classes and his son. He noted that others in his family should learn as well. "I started learning ASL and encourage others in my family to learn. My son signs with me. He helps teach me how to sign." He seems very committed to ensuring that his son is included and has access to language in his environment. Ploy also reported that she is taking ASL classes at her son's school when she can, but she also learns new signs from her son.

Halgan shared that trying to learn ASL has been a benefit to her and her five children, three of whom are deaf. She added, "I like to learn the language. American Sign Language." However, she added, "I worry about language. I like to learn more, and more, and more." Halgan then expanded on how the school is teaching her ASL, but she still relies on the home signs they invented and used while living in Somalia. Her statements were raw and heavy with emotion. It was obviously a hard journey to try to learn a ASL (while she was still a new English language learner). But Halgan saw the benefit of having direct and full communication with all of her children, so she continued this arduous task.

I try to learn. I'm trying to learn a lot. They come to us and they teach us, but I'm not good at it. But still when I have a difficult time, I try to do the old way, the traditional way, when I used to be back home, when I used to talk to them with my fingers and all that, and still we understand each other.

At the end of the interview, Halgan asked me how she can learn more ASL because she wants to better be able to communicate with her deaf children. She said that she wants to be as fluent as they are. Halgan mentioned many times that she understands her children, because she is their mother and she knows them. However, Halgan clearly realizes that the more ASL she learns, the more she is able to communicate clearly with her deaf children. It is a hard thing to talk about for her, to admit that she could communicate better with her children if she had better ASL skills.

The deaf families shared their experiences learning ASL as new immigrants. This was a big part of their immigration experience. As deaf people, they know the importance of language access and exposure for their deaf children as well. The Pérez family shared that they would advise immigrant families with young deaf children to learn ASL and become involved in the Deaf community. Adama and Chathura had similar advice for the families. Their advice was more of a warning that learning the language can be hard and overwhelming, but it is important to stick with it.

Each of the families in this study had to make choices for language use for their deaf child. This impacted where the child attended school as well as how they communicated at home. For some, this was a rather simple choice because they knew what language they wanted. For others, it was crossing a line that they had once felt meant

giving up a dream that their deaf child would be able to rely on speech and spoken language to communicate, and, as shown above, for some, it changed the way they understood their deaf child and what being deaf really meant for their child.

Parenthood and School Engagement

The schools, specifically the teachers, were a vital part in helping parents on this journey supporting and advising families while providing encouragement and insight on their children's development. In the previous sections, it was revealed that many of the schools offer courses, free or paid, for parents to learn ASL. But that was just one part of the relationship between the families and schools. Families also brought an idea of education, the role or importance of education, and their role in their child's education. This was often derived from their own experiences as students. In many cases, the school systems and structures, as well as the roles of the school and families varied from country to country.

Differences of educational systems. The families in the interview reflected on their own experiences as students in their COO. These experiences were often quite different than what happens in America. This is particularly true for special education services for deaf students and early intervention services. The deaf families were able to compare deaf education in their COO with deaf education in the US. Even though there were logistical differences in services and opportunities, there were many overlaps with the hearing families' experiences as well.

Chathura shared about some of the differences in his experience as a deaf student in Sri Lanka and his experience as a parent of a deaf child in the US. He shared about the difference in parent/teacher conferences and IEPs.

I grew up in the deaf school. My parents are hearing. The teacher was hearing. There was only one meeting per year. That is all, unless you were in trouble. Then they called your parents. But those were the only two things. There was no paper work. No information shared. Nothing. At the yearly meeting, they talked about your development in school and your achievements. Anything new, like new hearing aid systems. The federal government paid the teachers. They had first grade, second, third, etc. I can remember as a child, looking down the hallway and you could see the parents in a circle meeting with the teachers. Then they would come to me, but they never shared anything with me...Sri Lanka is very different. There is no curriculum for the schools or Federal involvement. America is so different. From the moment I started, I had to learn about IEPs. I read the policy that parents have the right to say no. I was shocked. I just cannot. In Sri Lanka, if the teacher is wrong, you say nothing. You must respect the teacher. It doesn't matter, even if the teacher is wrong. Here in America, you can tell the teacher if he is wrong. This is a direct conflict with my culture. At the IEP meeting, they explained to me that I have rights and that my child has rights. There were a lot of papers for us to sign. The speech therapist was there, and the language specialists, and the ASL specialist. It is very important. It is all evidence based and there to support my children.

Chathura noted that the relationship and authority between the teacher and families in the US was a “conflict” with his culture. Yet, in America, parents were expected to be advocates for the needs of their child, particularly in special education where the process is legal and can have a large impact on the support and success of the child in school.

Adama, having a younger deaf child, so less experienced in IFSP/IEPs reflected on the difference in early identification of deafness, intervention preschool programs and language use and access, and quality of teachers between the US and Mali. He also speculated on what may happen if he needs to return with his family to Mali.

[The US] is the best education. They start teaching the children very young. They expose them to a lot and they are able to learn very quickly. In Mali, there is a wide range of ages when deaf children start school. Some start at 5 years old, some start at 10. So, in first grade, you have a variety of ages. Some kids are small, some are big. It is hard to teach them all. And the teachers are not very good. The government just places teachers there. They often know very little sign. But after graduation, returning back home would be hard. For hearing people, it is ok, but for me, it would be hard. There was not a school or a lot for deaf to do, so I would have to teach [my daughter] myself and then maybe later go back for school or go to school in America.

Luis is deaf and grew up in the deaf school in Peru. Therefore, his frame is specifically on deaf education in his COO. His description of the difference in education between his COO and schools in the US is similar to the other families in the study. He

mainly referenced the difference in relation to the overall quality and attitude of teachers. He references a recent visit to Peru where he visited the deaf school.

I suspect that the nuns invested in educating and working with the children. Now that they have been replaced with teachers, the teachers maybe have low pay or maybe they don't follow the curriculum or their training in special education. The special education training includes mental retardation, blind, and other disabilities. That curriculum is wrong for deaf students. So maybe that is what is wrong...I just went to Peru and saw about 2-3 teachers who were very motivated. They were passionate about deaf education. They want resources because there are not many available there. The other teachers, though, they couldn't care less. When I visit in the classroom, the teacher is tapping the child's chin and encouraging the child to use their voice. That is the wrong approach. You know? Grabbing a person's face. Those 2-3 teachers, they tried to sign., but they were more passionate for more information, for resources.

These deaf families note that the schools in their COO do not provide a good education and particularly not access to language for deaf children. They each highlight different aspects of schooling, IEPs, early intervention, teacher quality, and resources, but it is all negative in comparison to what they experience in the US.

For the hearing families, they also note a big difference between the quality of schools in the US versus schools in their COO. Some of them noted that there were no schooling options for deaf children in their COO, although, programs do exist, the families are just not aware of them or would not have been able to access them due to

money or location. They all stress that the schools in America are much better than what they had in their COO.

Ploy shared the differences in educational opportunities as she saw them for her children both in Burma in the refugee camp and the US. She noted that there are more opportunities for education for her family in the US. She noted that the language learning is much different in the US.

[In America, it is] different. When I was a child, just starting in the refugee camp, Burma too, not really good education. Like when they complain like [in] five grade, they don't know anything, just only really some words, like ABCs. Now, [in America] for her children, they are great. They do speak really good English... And yeah, there's such a difference. In America, it's a really good education.

Carlos also commented on the lack of quality education in Mexico, where he was raised. He highlighted that, although you are able to attend school, the quality of that education is questionable. He said, "...in Mexico, sometimes you learn more on the streets than at school." Carlos shared that teachers are not well educated. He mentioned that the teachers are not motivated to work and accept bribes. He even noted a friend who completed school yet is still illiterate. Carlos described about his daughter's educational opportunities had they remained in Mexico, indicating that there were no educational opportunities for his deaf daughter there. All of this is compared to their daughter's current school about which Carlos shared, "We believe that our daughter is getting more education than our normal boy."

The García family had similar experiences with school while growing up in Mexico. Jose reported a lack of learning in school, aimed at the quality of the teachers. He said that what and how much he learned was related to how much the teacher knew.

Joseph discussed the difference in pedagogy between the US and Guinea. He noted the variations in teaching styles as well as resources, and content.

They are really two different systems. Guinea is based on the French system.

There are not many books or computers, libraries, and not enough teachers. There is especially a lack of deaf teachers. They are learning reading, writing, and math skills. It is focused on rote teaching, not a constructivist approach. In the US, there is everything available, a library, technology, and Internet. There are many high possibilities. Communication between the school and the family is high. In Guinea, they only give you the curriculum and that is all.

Abebe highlighted the variations in structure and discipline between schools in Ethiopia, specifically in the countryside, and in the US. He described schools in Ethiopia as being much more strict than here. In Ethiopia, students received whippings for being disrespectful and for not doing what they told. And if you received a whipping at school, you would get receive one at home as well. Abebe indicated that they spend the entire school day learning from the Koran. He also pointed out the structure of the day in content and time is very different. School lasts all day long because there is a long break at lunch so the kids can go home to help on the farm. Abebe moved to the US in high school, so his experiences are based on his primary school experiences in rural Ethiopia.

The parents understood school based on their experiences as children. Their expectations for school in the US were largely based on what they experienced, or wish they experienced, in their schooling back home. Nearly all of the families noted schools in their COO were lacking in something compared to their experiences in schools in the US. This included curriculum, resources, pedagogy, and teacher quality. This is important to consider as parents talk about how they view the importance of education and how they engage in their child's education.

It also impacts how satisfied the participants were with their children's current school. They are coming from a system where teachers are not engaged and not teaching, learning is not guaranteed to happen, there is a lack of access to teachers with specialization in teaching deaf and hard of hearing children who can sign fluently, so it is likely that these parents are just grateful that their deaf child has an opportunity to learn.

Role of the bilingual schools. The families in the study were asked to talk about their experiences with their deaf children's schools. Many participants focused on the teachers when addressing this topic, but other school professionals, and curriculum were also mentioned. Teachers spent a lot of time with the children and got to know them very well. For the families in this study, teachers often made a big impact on them, including how they understood their child's deafness or how the families adjusted to parenting in the US.

The deaf families, overall, were very happy with the teachers and support they got from their child's school. For Chathura, as a first time father, he expected the teachers be very involved in helping him and his wife learn how to raise and educate their child.

They leaned heavily on the teacher for support outside of the classroom and expected her to provide them with that support.

One teacher who is very good would come to help me because I was international. She did this on her own. Her bosses did not know about it. One day, she was caught and told that she should not help like that. There should be boundaries. She agreed and came to my home and told us. I was upset. But of course, I said it is ok, so ahead and go. I was shocked. I really needed help to know what to do. Ok, I will be fine, and I just needed to try, try, try, try, try. So, we talked about the boundary. It was a culture shock. In my family, you expect everyone to help with everything. Here, it is really just individually. I was not used to that.

Chathrua recognized his own culture shock in the teacher's inability to assist them in the way that he felt he needed. The idea of a boundary was foreign to him. He went on to talk more about his experience with the teachers.

I felt that the teachers were annoyed with me because I was constantly interrupting them to ask questions: I need help. How do I do that? The teachers seemed to have a line, a boundary. When I had a baby, I really needed help, but they wouldn't help me. When our baby was small, my wife would interrupt my work for me to come and help her. Or she wanted me to text back and forth because she needed help with something. This sometimes made me frustrated. One of the staff told us, "I cannot help you. My boss told me that I couldn't help. I need to have a boundary. I explained that I am international. How am I supposed to know? So we had to accept it. It was a challenge. Help with information. Like,

for reading where someone would come to my home and work with us one on one. Two or three different people came.

Despite wishing the teachers could provide more support to his family, Chathura was also very thankful for what they did teach him. Particularly that they encouraged him to engage and sign with his young daughter. He was also directed to sign up for a free reading program that assigns deaf adults to families. The deaf language and literacy models come to the family's home and show the family how to read a book with their deaf child through ASL. Chathura continued his story, picking up after the teacher said she needed to have boundaries. Though he was able to get tutoring services to help them learn to read with their children as well as social services to help with things like providing food for their dinners.

In this case, the teachers did not provide exactly what the family expected or hoped for, but they were still valuable resources and pointed the family to helpful resources such as the reading program and the school social working to ensure they were eating.

Adama felt very supported by his daughter's teachers. He mentioned that they help him by providing feedback on his daughter's progress and ways they can support her.

[The teachers] are very supportive. They do homevisits. They check in on the behaviors and help me for the future in relation to her behavior and things. Sometimes, my wife and I go to meetings with the teacher to talk about our child's progress.

Adama was very happy with the services he was getting for his deaf baby. The teachers and school were supportive and helpful for him and his wife.

The Pérez family also had a high regard for their son's teachers. Elisa stated that the teachers work with all of the families to meet their needs and provide the family with home visits. The teachers made sure the families know what is happening with their child and in the classroom.

They do home visits. Sometimes, I have to miss due to work and a friend takes him to school. The teachers will fill me in on everything that I miss.... They work with a variety of families. There are some families that are too committed to cochlear implants and very diverse and they commit to working with all of them.

The hearing families were also pleased with the support and services they received from the school. For some, it was transformative as the teacher helped them to understand their deaf children better, changing their perception of what it means to be deaf and to raise a deaf child.

Ploy spoke about how the teachers shared with her that her son is very smart. She noted that the teachers informed her that he is also very sweet and a kind friend to his peers. When Ploy shared this during the interview, she looked very proud with a big smile.

Similarly, Jose shared how he and Maria were reluctant to send their son to a school for deaf children, but once they saw the school and their son started, they felt good about the school. It was the teachers who eased their fears and the transition of their son

into school. It was also his teacher who helped the parents, Maria in particular, reframe how she perceives her son's deafness, as Maria noted:

I also am very grateful to [the teacher] because she's always treated my son so well. When he started then in the class with [her], I immediately started seeing the changes because she's very loving with the kids...And teachers have told me that the fact that he doesn't hear or speak, that means that he learns less than the other kids. Some people, I mean people like him, that they learn the sign language, can, you know, achieve a lot.

Maria shared a specific conversation where the teacher reassured her about her son and his future, his strengths, and his potential. This really impacted how she saw her child and the role of the school in her child's development and future. Maria started off not wanting him to attending the school, now she doesn't want him to miss even one day.

One year ago in the summer, he went on a trip and I came along. And the teacher, I remember her name. She told me not to worry about my son. She asked me if I had another kid. And I told her, my daughter. She is normal, she attends a normal school. And she asked me if I was learning sign language and I told her no. She told me it was very important for me to learn the sign language. When my son grows up, he will have friends from the same school and the kids will come home and they will use the sign language to communicate among themselves. They will probably speak three languages, sign language, Spanish, and English. She said they'll be using sign language, and if you learn, you will know what he's talking with his friends. She said to me that if you really put

effort, you can learn sign language and you'll be able to communicate with your son. Don't worry about your daughter. She speaks and can hear. Don't think that your son is less. Don't worry so much about him, because she told me that once he's a grown up, the school looks for a job for him. She told me he's in very good hands. And she told me he will study. I've heard the teachers are good. I didn't want him to attend in the beginning because I saw so many kids, they couldn't speak. But I've seen that he's improving. Even if he gets sick, I don't want him to miss class. If he misses one day, he is left behind.

Because of the encouragement and hard work of the teacher, Maria went from not wanting to send her son to a deaf school for fear he would not talk to not wanting him to miss even one day of school. The teacher had a very powerful role in how Jose and Maria understood deafness and how they parent their son.

Like Jose and Maria, Carlos was reluctant to start his child in the deaf school, but then came to realize it was a great place for him. Carlos compared the experience of starting his child in school to their immigrant experience. It was rough in the beginning with a new language and culture, but now it was becoming "normal".

In the beginning, we thought it would be a very difficult situation because of her impairment. She couldn't hear. She couldn't talk. But had she was admitted to the school, everything changed. And we also were admitted to take classes, sign language classes. And right now things are kind of normal, you know? It's like when we came here; we didn't know anything. We didn't know the language; we didn't know people. It was like our experience as immigrants.

He hones in on the newness of learning ASL and learning about deaf culture. It was a big change for their family, as they were still in the early stages of learning what it means to parent a deaf child. Carlos compares this process to his experience moving to the US.

Halgan did not speak ill of her experience with the school or the teachers. However, her comments pointed to a feeling of a lack of support for her and her family. Halgan shared that she is unsure of how to get the help for her children with their schoolwork that they need. She is unaware of any support services or tutoring that the school may provide, though she would be happy to accept the service. Halgan's thoughts were more directed at the involvement of the school in the daily grind, particularly with her children's homework. She was the only one with older deaf children as well as younger deaf children, so this may have been less of a noticeable factor for the families with younger children who may not experience this yet.

When the Kirui family was asked about their experiences with the school, Aasiya commented that the school communicates with them everyday, in detail. Haweeyo added that she was very happy and appreciative about this. The communication is very important to them because their son is also autistic and has a hard time expressing his day to his family. She noted that the communication went from school to home, but the families were not directed to respond to the school about anything from home. The daily log also indicated his mood throughout the day, which may impact his mood in the evening. This was yet another way the teachers had a strong impact on how the family engaged in and felt about their child's school.

Role of the families. When talking about family engagement, some of the families revealed their role, as parents or caregivers, in their child's education. Some referred to how they teach or do not teach academic content, others referred to values they teach and reinforce at home that are not taught in school. A couple of the families noted their role in passing on traits and characteristics from their COO culture. Again, how they viewed their role was often connected to their own experiences in their COO as well as their goals for their children.

Luis shared that, at the time of the interview, they had no concerns about the school's curriculum. But he noted that if it became an issue, he would say something. Luis has a degree in deaf education and he and his wife both graduated from secondary school in America, so they have some familiarity with school systems in America. Though there were no overall curriculum concerns, Luis did reference the importance of teaching culture and diversity in the school. This family felt that the school should have a role in introducing and exposing children to cultures. Elisa stated that it is primarily a family responsibility to teach cultural values to a child, but that the school plays a role.

Family should be responsible to teach cultural heritage to a child. The school can play an introductory part. For example, my daughter's father is from Kenya and, at her school, they talk about diversity. So, she learns abstract content at school and we are able to explain and expand on it at home. So, school is important for exposure, and then it can be explained more at home.

Luis added his thoughts, emphasizing the importance for kids to learn their heritage culture.

It is hard now because he is young, but as he grows older, we will want to expose him to a variety of books about South America. It is important for kids to develop a strong sense of identity early on. That is better than waiting until later to say, I am Hispanic, for example. They need to learn that early, now. [Culture} should be talked about in school and our values should be explained at home.

And Elisa responded about how the school and home can collaborate. As a deaf mother, she also made a point that the schools for the deaf are primarily teachers of culture for some children, since most deaf children are born into hearing families who lack the language to teach them a lot about their culture.

We are raising first generation Americans. Also, the school does consult with us because sometimes their understanding and the information is not always accurate. For example, holidays like Cinco de Mayo is not really celebrated. Why do they celebrate that?...And often, deaf children learn about their culture from school because their parents are hearing and no teaching happens at home. Well, not nothing, but they often don't have the language to teach them.

This is an interesting theory, that deaf children from hearing, non-signing families may learn more about their culture at school where they have access to language.

However, the other families in this study did not confirm this idea. Many of the participating families talked about the importance of passing on their cultural heritage to their children. However, no one mentioned not knowing ASL as a barrier to this.

Many of the families mentioned learning social skills, morals, and values as part of their response to their role as parents in educating their child. Joseph also views the

school and home as both contributing to the child's academic and behavior as well as his growth and development. He said that the academic piece should be 50/50 between school and home. At home, Joseph engaged in educational activities such as reading, homework, kits, games, listening, writing, and math. Homework is an important part of the daily routine in his home. It happens every evening, and even some mornings before school. Joseph emphasized that it is important that the children learn discipline. He said, "It is important to learn how to behave. You need to conform to the rule of society." He expanded this and added that he is instilling values from his culture in his son in the home.

I teach him about learning time. He has tasks in the morning and throughout the day. He has responsibilities. You are an ambassador of your family. What you learn in your house is what you show. Even in Africa, the culture changed from when I was raised to now when everything is possible. It is important to teach respect. Listening is very important. You have to listen to understand. You have to help [children] to listen and communicate. In West Africa, you try to for the best to teach kids to behave and control anger. They have to learn to be responsible.

The García family also stated that it is the family's job to teach the children social skills. They did mention that they do homework as part of their daily routine, but when specifically asked how they support their child's education in the home, this was Jose's answer,

Well, for me, the first education is at home, and then at school. If at home you don't educate them, at school they will be the same. They will be belligerent...

For me, the most important thing is they have to learn how to respect other people.

The Hernandez family gave a very similar answer to the García and Diallo Families. They feel that the school should teach things that the parents cannot teach and at home, they should learn how to behave. Carlos stated,

Well, our daughter is going to school to learn what she has to learn. She comes to school to learn what we cannot teach her at home. At home, what we are trying to teach her is to respect people, how to behave at home, making beds, for example. Things like that. Like ordinary domestic things. As you know, she is coming to school to learn. She has to focus on that, on learning. At home is different, you know. She's learning how to behave, to respect other people, things like that.

All participants specifically addressed the importance of teaching social skills to their children. This included how to behave and interact in society. These skills were based on what the families valued as appropriate and important behaviors. They felt it was their responsibility and not the school's to teach this to their children. One family was able to talk about the differences between what the school teaches and what they teach at home.

The Perera family felt that it was their responsibility to teach their children respect. Chathura also felt that it was the job of the family to teach these values to his children. In fact, shared that he does not agree with how the school handles behavior

issues and how it compared to techniques he used at home. He also highlighted many of the things that he values, as a parent, for his children to learn and know.

The school is very separate. The school has their own things that are separate from our culture. We must include some of the school culture in our home, of course, but there is a boundary.

Chathrua shared that they use a different discipline system in his home than the school's time-out system. He emphasized the value of talking to his children about their choices rather than separating to give them time to think about it. Chathura also shared that they live in a building with many international families and that they share meals between families to expose one another to different foods. He encourages his children to try these new foods to understand that everyone around the world has different foods. Chathrua went on to elaborate on teaching culture in his home.

[My children] have not fully succumbed to American culture. They really have parts of both. For example, my oldest child and how she respects me. I did train her that she must respect me first. And in our culture, we bow, so she needs to be used to doing that. Both know and both bow with me. You must respect your parents. We don't neglect them. We provide for them and make them happy and they must respect us. Without us, they would have nothing or be lost. You must respect your parents. That is still practiced in my country today. I did bow to my parents. It still applies today and I keep that with my children. Sometimes my children ask why the American children do not do that and I explain that they cannot lose their Sri Lankan culture. They need to keep it. They need to keep both

cultures. In the future, when they grow up, they can make their own choices. But I give them a model to keep.

Chathura also emphasizes this in his discussion of daily routine. He mentions enforcing rules and values, such as when to eat and what to eat. Chathura puts a lot of emphasis on them being healthy, eating and drinking enough and getting enough sleep, while not sleeping in too late. He also incorporated reading into the routine he described, as well as a tutor from the school who comes to work with his children in the evenings. So, while the children are growing up in the US, Chathura holds tightly to the cultural system from his COO and values passing that on to his children, despite what they learn while living in the cultural system in the US.

Ploy focused mainly on her engagement relating to education. She stated that she wants to help them with homework, but she is unable to due to her limited education and English language skills. She had mentioned earlier that she only attended school for a few years herself, and she does not speak English or ASL. In discussing her daily routine, Ploy included the children helping with chores, but nothing about homework or other “academic” work. She also emphasizes the importance of the children having responsibilities in the home.

Yeah, I can't do anything. I would like to read for them, to show them for example like math or English, how to pronounce and stuff like that, but I try to ask someone there to show how to read.

However, Ploy noted the value of good education.

In our culture, we want them to go to school and to try hard and also when they come home, I want them to help family too, to like clean, washing dish, something like that. And also clean the rest of the other house. And also I wish them to be really good children in the future and to be educated persons.

Each one of these families valued teaching their child respect and responsibility.

It was made obvious that it was very important to each of these families that their child show them respect and act respectful outside of the home. It was also important that they understood that they have responsibilities and that they carry out their responsibilities.

Parenthood and Parents' Goals for Their Children

It was obvious that all of the families love and care deeply about their children. Several of the participants became emotional throughout various parts of the interview as they talked about how wonderful their children are and the bright futures they hoped for them. All of the participants wanted their children to have opportunities and choices. Being successful included having a good education, having good language abilities (in both spoken and sign language), and drawing from the example of strength and the experiences of their parents as immigrants. Participants immigrated to the US so that they could have better opportunities and create better lives for themselves and their children. They navigated their way through life and new language in America, though identification and choices associated with parenting a deaf child, and are still continuing in this navigational process, as all of the children discussed in this study were under eight years old.

For some families, the goals they expressed for their children aligned with their understanding and role in school engagement and how they viewed their deaf child, though, as explained earlier, several families were still navigating this piece.

Chathura shared that he wants his children to be successful and have the educational opportunities that he did not have. His dream was for his daughter to become what she wants, a doctor and his son to be an actor or teacher as he desires. Chathura wants his children to be able to become what they want to, to have the education to make choices. That is how he will know they have been successful.

The Hernandez family reported similar goals that are also tied to getting a good education. There is a strong belief that education leads to financial stability and health.

You know, dreams that any parents would have. We would like her to succeed, to study, that she could make us proud. We are proud of her, that she can get ready to live a better life for herself. Especially if she could study. I think any parent has that kind of dream for their kids. Right now we are trying to prepare ourselves financially and in terms of health too. Because if we are good, our kids will be good, too. You know, she has to study, to keep studying, and then we have to be good in terms of health and financially.

To these families, education is the key to bring opportunities for success in life and happiness. They reveal that they are working hard and committed to helping their child get a good education to ensure this success.

Adama also elaborated on how he parents to ensure his daughter is successful. His focus was on having a strong language foundation. The language emphasis was on both

ASL and printed English, as key factors in his daughter being successful. Adama is a deaf parent, so his experience learning language and struggling to learn new language as a child and as an immigrant, may have impacted his response to the question. He emphasized that, with that language, he will also reinforce her academic learning in school and make sure she is reading.

Jose stated that his goal ties to language as an advantage to being successful. But different than Adama, in this case, language involves his son also learning to speak. Jose said, "My dream is that someday he'll be able to speak, to use three languages. In this country, if you can use three or more languages, it's better." This is similar to Joseph's dream for his deaf son. He also wants him to be able to hear and speak and feels that, combined with a good education, will allow him to be successful in life.

My dream is coming true. To hear and speak. It is now coming true with the CI.

So now he is learning how to use hearing and speaking to be a good student. From there, he will complete elementary school- reading well, writing well, listening well, and comprehending well.

But, while Joseph wants him to learn to use listening and speaking well, he also values the maintenance of ASL as a language. He concluded, "He uses ASL and speech. So how do we intensify this and not lose sign language? It is step by step.

While it could be implied that all of the families' responses were based on the struggles and journeys in their own lives, Ploy, Abebe, and Elisa specifically talk about the importance of their children not having to go through what they did. They also want

their children to understand and know what their parents have experienced and sacrificed for the children to have the opportunities that they do.

Ploy wants her children to be successful and take care of Ploy when she is older. She states that education is the key to this success. Ploy said she wants her children to have more opportunities that she never got to have.

... [A good education is] really important. Yeah, very important. Yeah, for example, if you see like now, I have completed only five grades and then I cannot find good job. I have to work hard and then find a very low level job. For example, when my children complete their school here and college university, like that I wish them to get a good job and to be really good persons. And I want to see my children to be educated people. And I would like to try the best for my children to be really educated people and get good education. And if you look at me, I do not speak English, I have no education, and then whenever I go shopping or go anywhere, people talk to me in English and then I cannot answer. I do not understand sometimes and am really sad about that too. I want my children to try hard in their lives too.

Ploy works hard to provide for her family and overcome everyday barriers that stem from a lack of her own education and her English language abilities. She wants her children to draw from the example of her strength and work hard to overcome their own barriers.

Abebe noted his desire for his daughter to be happy and live a life without regrets. He does not see her being deaf as a hindrance to this. He shared about his own mistakes

and regrets in life, with a desire for his children to avoid these things. He emphasized that education, a good education, is a key factor in not making the mistakes that he made in his own life. He continued to speculate his goal for his children into adulthood.

Elisa explicitly pointed out that she wants her children to know where their parents came from and what they went through to get where they are now. Specifically what character it took for them to endure the hardships they faced in order to achieve what they have in life.

Well, for my children, my goal is for them to understand what we went through, what our families went through both us, the mother and father, and for them, our children. I want them to understand the value of hard work and have good work ethics, integrity. It is not easy sometimes, but I want them to understand where their family comes from. A key part for us is teaching our children at home.

Talking about what [their father] went through when he came to the United States, sleeping on the street. What their mother went through. I want them to know that. That is my goal.

It is telling that many of the parents cited what they identified as their own inadequacies that caused them hardship and directly tied these to goals for their children. Where many of the parents lacked access to quality education and knowing English, they wanted their children to have language and good education. These are factors that the parents see as barriers in their own success.

Conclusion

Navigating parenting with a deaf child as an immigrant parent is a complicated experience. The families in this study shared their experiences with a range of raw emotion as they reflected the memory of learning that their child is deaf, navigating choices for their child, and their daily lives as immigrants with a young deaf child. The deaf families and the hearing families had different experiences in terms of navigating this journey in terms of attitudes toward deafness and navigating resources and options, but overall, each family's understanding of family engagement was similar in that it reflected their own values and beliefs stemming from the various cultural systems in which they participate.

All of the participating families had many stories to share about navigating life in America and navigating parenting with a deaf child. Their trails and victories showed through as they shared their experiences. Nearly every family shared that they would help other families in similar situations by sharing what they had learned along the way. These families are doing what most good families do, trying to create the best situation to provide the best resources for their child to have every chance for success. It was clear that everything that they did, every choice that they made, was done to create a better life for their families, particularly their deaf children.

Chapter Five: Discussion

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of immigrant parents with young deaf children who were deaf. The following research questions were addressed: What are the experiences of immigrant parents with young children who are deaf as they navigate parenting across various cultural systems? How do these experiences inform our understanding of family engagement among immigrant families? This included their understandings of 1) what it means to be deaf, 2) what is best for their child, and, 3) what their role is in the school and education of their children. Looking specifically at immigrant parents with young, deaf children, this study provides insight on 1) immigrant families' understanding of deafness, 2) navigating parenting with a deaf child, and, 3) family engagement in their children's education. This area has little to no existing research, but needs research in order to better build engagement between schools and families.

The study suggests that the parenting experiences of the immigrant families are heavily influenced by the various cultural systems in which they participate. This included Deaf culture, their family culture, and the school culture. Families referenced the influence of the various cultural systems both explicitly and implicitly when offering explanation for their experiences as parents.

Summary of Results

The findings of this study, detailed in chapter four, reveal the complexity of parenting experiences among immigrant families with young deaf children. The families in this study immigrated to the US for many reasons, but mostly to provide a better life and opportunities for their families and themselves, a common story told in the literature (Vesely, Goodman, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2015). This “better life” comes with many obstacles and sacrifices, particularly when it comes to parenting. The families face learning a new language, navigating new cultural systems, potential isolation from the host community, limited family support, and new financial challenges.

This study suggests that parenting a child who is deaf adds many new challenges and changes to those the family is already facing. The families go through a process that starts with the initial identification of the child as deaf. The reaction and processing of this news by the parents and extended family was directly related to their perspective of deafness. For families who were fearful of the potential for their child to lead a productive, successful life, this fear was alleviated as a result of their child accessing services and language received at school that enabled the child to learn and develop. The perspective of the child’s teacher that deaf children are capable also eased parental fears and concerns.

After learning their child is deaf, the families were then faced with many new parenting experiences that include navigating the support services and schooling options available to their child and family. Each state varies on the services they offer (Lane, et. al., 1996), for example, one participant moved states because the state where she was living did not have an ASL early intervention program option. Many of the options

available to families were not made clear to the families in this study. This is true for non-immigrant families as well (Lane et. al., 1996). However, it could be assumed that non-immigrant families may feel more comfortable researching to find options for their family. Advocating for the rights and needs of your child and finding appropriate services required that the immigrant parents be assertive and develop navigational capital to seek assistance and find the best resources for their child and family.

The children in this study were students at schools that use ASL. This adds another new navigational experience (Yosso, 2005) as the deaf child is now learning an additional language, ASL, and culture, Deaf culture. The hearing families all reported that they either are learning ASL as well, either from classes at the school, or from their child. They also reported using cues that are part of the Deaf cultural system such as tapping their child to get their attention.

The families in this study sacrificed a lot for their children to have better options for a better future. The families reported that the options for deaf children in their countries of origin were bleak, especially in comparison to the US. But they also reported many struggles in the US including isolation and financial struggles. Schools play an important role in the experiences and transitions for immigrant families. However, much more can be done to help make this transition easier on the family and, therefore, more beneficial to the deaf child. Schools need to be more aware of the unique needs of these families and strive to meet them. The number of immigrant families with young deaf children is continuing to rise. These families, like most, want the best for their children, and this includes providing them with a good education both at home and school. Early

identification services should be equipped to provide families with all of the services available to them and then help them retain these services. Schools should be prepared to provide an array of services to meet the diverse needs of this population. The experiences and burdens of these families can be lightened if there are changes in policy and practice. However, overall, the families are grateful for the services they receive for themselves and their child.

Conclusions

This study provided further insight on how immigrants, both deaf and hearing, come to the US in a variety of ways and adjust to life in their new homes as well as life with a deaf child. Their experiences and understanding were influenced, among other things, by their own hearing status as well as how they came to the US. Some came as refugees, some as minors (alone or with parents), some came legally, and some crossed the border without documentation. This study confirmed what other studies (Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011; Vesely, Goodman, & Scurlock, 2014, Vesely, Goodman, Ewaida, & Kearney, 2014) have shown, that they came to live in America and provide a better opportunities, both financial and educational, for themselves and their families.

Each family member brought with them their understanding of what it means to be deaf. This was largely based on their experience growing up in their COO, and on whether they are deaf or hearing. The deaf families were, in this study, more accepting, and even happy when they learned that their child was deaf. This was in spite of the fact that some reported that deaf people in their COO would not wish to have a deaf child. This aligns with the work of Rolland (1994) that shows that a person's perception of the

causes of disability and their understanding of normalcy impact their perception on disability. The perception of deafness and other disabilities is, overall, negative in developing nations, though this is slowly starting to change (Abberley, 1987). Within this study, the deaf families were happy to have a deaf child, though they would have been happy to have a healthy hearing child as well. The news of their children's being deaf was good news to them.

This study provides better understanding, related to culture, to parents' reaction to learning their child is deaf because these families experience this through their view of deaf individuals in their COO. Generally, all families stated that the view of deafness in their COO was very negative. Most of the hearing families classified deafness as a disability. They stated that disabled people in their COO were look down on and considered outcasts in society. Their statements aligned with the works of Steinberg et.al (1997) and Vodounou (2008) that found that deaf and persons with disabilities can be highly stigmatized within Latino and African communities. These studies suggested that persons with disabilities are considered a burden on the community and a sign that the person or family has been cursed. In this study, one Latino father stated that he used to be one to laugh at people with disabilities. Many of them stated that there are no school options for deaf in their country. However, there are likely to be schools and programs for the deaf in their COO, however lacking, but the families are unaware of them.

Regardless of how they once viewed deaf people, or how they may have reacted to the news and reality that their child was deaf, all of the families had positive views of their own deaf children. Their understanding of deafness transformed as they saw their

deaf child succeed and learn. Some families commented that they were surprised by this and very happy that their child was so “smart”.

Navigating parenting with a deaf child. Some of the families immigrated before they became parents, and some families had their babies in the US. All of the families, both deaf and hearing, were surprised to learn that their child was deaf. The news impacted the families differently, but regardless of their perspective of deafness, all of them were completely committed to making sure that their children had opportunities to learn and grow. This impacted the choices they made for their child for language and early intervention or schooling. This research adds to the literature about how families make choices for their deaf children by looking specifically at immigrant families’ experiences. Many of the hearing families were not provided with all of their choices from the beginning. However, they refused to wait until someone told them where to go or what to do. They were proactive in finding the right program for their child. This is powerful as many of these immigrant families are still navigating life in America, which often does not lead to feelings of empowerment or understanding how to navigate various support systems. They are now living a life that leaves them more isolated than what they knew in their COO. More research should be conducted to see if their experience in this isolating culture prepared them to be proactive to meet the needs of their child.

The literature shows that families with deaf children need to make a choice about language access and opportunities for their deaf child (Marschark, 2009; Hyde et.al., 2010). For immigrant families in this study, this is complicated by their perceptions of deafness and their own experiences learning language. Adding ASL for these families

still learning English can be a big burden to the families. Overall, 85% of families with a deaf child choose CIs for their child, and want them to develop listening and speaking, oral language skills (Meadow-Orlans, Sass-Lehrer, & Mertens, 2003). In this study, though all of the families had their deaf children enrolled in a program that uses ASL, each of the hearing families shared that their hope and their goal was for their child to learn to use listening and speaking skills to communicate. In contrast, the deaf families in this study all reported that they were not interested in getting a cochlear implant or spoken language development for their child. Though there is a rise in the number of deaf parents getting CIs for their deaf children, it is common for deaf parents to choose to also teach their child ASL because of their own experiences being able to fully access language visually (Mitchiner & Sass-Lehrer, 2011). Sometimes families are either informed of language choices, including ASL, or they are referred to ASL early intervention programs when their child is not succeeding in an oral environment. The families in this study all, at some point, chose ASL for their deaf children.

Family engagement in the education of their child. This study shows how immigrant families with young deaf children engage in their children's education. This specific perspective has not previously been researched and adds to the growing literature on family engagement. Previous literature on family engagement among immigrant families shows that the way the families engage in their children's education is based on their experiences in their COO as well as their perception of the role of education in their child's life and their understanding of family engagement (Berry, 2003; Halgunseth, et. al., 2009). Berry (2003) explores the individual differences in acculturation.

Acculturation is examined in various strategies. This study examined how the families' attitudes about deafness were shaped largely by their acculturation experiences, and their choices for their child also ultimately impact how they engage in their child's education. Their attitude toward deafness and their language choices for their child, coupled with their own language knowledge, all impact how they engage in the education of their child.

Most of the families reported that their children's access to education was one of the benefits of living in the US. All of the participants noted that educational opportunities and quality were better in the US than in their COO. They also remarked that it was very important to them that their children receive a good education. Their definition of what a good education looks like only varied slightly. However, some of the families noted that, as their child grew and learned more, particularly after entering a bilingual program that uses ASL, they realized how smart their deaf child was. Some of the families admitted that they were fearful that the academic capabilities of their deaf child and that the child might somehow be limited due to their being deaf.

Most participants in this study mentioned helping with homework, or a desire to find someone to help their child with homework, as part of their routine of engaging in their child's education. Jeynes (2005) reported similar findings in a meta-analysis done on family engagement. The meta-analysis showed that while homework is part of the routine and important to the families, how they help with their children's homework is impacted by two things, language and parental academic achievement. For the families in this study, this included not only knowledge of English, but also ASL. However, even if

the adults in the family felt that they could not help with the homework due to a language barrier or their own education level, homework time still was mentioned as part of the daily routine for most families. Turney and Kao (2009) researched family involvement, which includes homework help, and found that parental language ability directly impacted their involvement in their children's education. This research was looking at English language skills. Assuming the family is not fluent in ASL, this may further hinder the ability of the families to engage in their children's education. Research should be done to explore the role of language in family engagement and involvement with immigrant parents with young, deaf children when ASL is the primary language of communication for the child.

Language was discussed throughout each interview. However, for the deaf families, they specifically talked about how they intentionally teach and support language access for their children when talking about how they engage in their child's education. This could be partly because they already know sign language (whether ASL and/or the sign language from their COO). It also includes English. Early language exposure is very important to the academic and social success of the child (Mayberry, Locke, and Kamzi, 2002) and these families shared that they are aware of this and want to be sure their child has the language skills they need. Upon learning that their child is deaf, parents are faced with choices of language and communication styles for their deaf child with the goal of providing early language access (Marschark, 2009). Based on the research of Marschark and content of the interviews in this study, it could be inferred that the hearing families

value giving language to their child, but it was not mentioned as part of how they engage in their child's education.

For many families in the study, the teachers as played a significant impact on how they understood the potential in their deaf child. Teachers were not specifically mentioned by any family when asked about engagement, but, based on what is known about family engagement, the family's understanding of the role of the teacher is an important component in how they engage in their child's education. Many of the families saw the school and home as more separate than connected. Guadalupe Valdés (1996) discusses the delineations between what is learned at home and what is learned at school that immigrant parents must make that their English-speaking, middle class peers do not have to make. This could be why they did not think to mention the teachers when talking about how they engage in their child's education. They were not thinking about the education they were receiving in school, but rather their education in the home.

In this study, as previously mentioned, teachers impacted how they families understood their child's being deaf and how the families engaged with their child. Families referenced many conversations with teachers and advice given to them by the teachers. This is significant because homework was mentioned the most as ways the families engage, but in speaking about family engagement, homework does not fall under family engagement, but rather, family involvement (Halgunseth, et. al., 2009). Also, helping with homework has little impact in the child's success compared to the parent's view of the ability of the child (Jaynes, 2005). The teachers where credited with shaping the evolving positive attitudes the parents had toward their child's being deaf. This is

shaping how the children will feel about themselves and the higher expectations the parents will have for their success. This is a reciprocal relationship that is impacting the parental ethnoteories (Harkness & Super, 2013). The parents are learning from the teachers through engaging in the classroom activities, such as field trips, and in dialogue through conversations at conferences or homevisits or other opportunities. The teachers are influencing how the parents perceive their child's being deaf and, thereby, impacting how they parent their deaf child.

Culture and values were clearly defined by the families as separate between school and home. Only one of 11 families mentioned that the school could and should have some role in teaching or reinforcing the family's culture in school. This family noted that, while it was not happening yet, due to the very young age of their son, they saw the school's role as providing general information on each child's culture through books and other celebrations or events. All of the other families said that their culture and was completely separate from the school. It was solely the family's responsibility to teach their cultural values, such as discipline, respect, clothing, food, and religion to their children. It was noted that the school had their cultural system and ways of doing things that were separate and not practiced at home by the family. This aligns with the research findings of Valdés (1996) and Vesely and Ginsberg (2011). These studies found that families view school and home as separate entities when it comes to culture.

Theoretical Connections

This study used Weisner's (2007) focus on daily routines to understand the families' customs of care within their developmental niche as described by Super and

Harkness (1986). Super and Harkness define customs of care as the parenting beliefs and practices, which are heavily influenced by the parental belief system and related emotion. The customs of care could be identified through focusing on the families' daily routines. Consistent within Harkness and Super's (1996) parental ethnotheories, each parent in this study framed their parenting decisions and practices within the various cultural systems in which they participate. For example, one deaf father shared that, despite the culture of respecting elders in his COO, he and his wife fought their parents' push to get a CI for their deaf grandchild and have the child raised orally. The parents pushed back because, as deaf adults, they understood that language access is very important and that being deaf does not mean you are less capable than your non-deaf peers.

Sometimes families were aware of how the cultural system influenced their thinking and sometimes they were not. It was something that parents did not mention unless prompted in the interview. They shared their perspectives of their child's being deaf, their experiences learning their child was deaf, and how they got to their current school. All of these choices were heavily embedded in and influenced by their experiences in various cultural systems. Many of the hearing families expressed grief at the news that their child was deaf and, for most, their first reaction was to attempt to help the child hear, through a CI or therapy. Viewing deafness in a pathological lens excludes the perspective from the Deaf community, that, given visual language access, deaf people are not limited by their being deaf. Many of the hearing families also reported reluctantly placing their deaf child in a school program for the deaf, particularly one that uses ASL. They were fearful that the child would be stigmatized and would not learn to talk.

The participants' parental ethnotheories, or the parenting beliefs and practices parents' hold within various cultural systems, were strongly linked to how they were raised in their COO and also strongly influenced by their life in America. Berry (2003) noted that acculturation is a reciprocal system and beliefs and practices from one cultural system are influenced by the new cultural system. As this happens, parents adapt pieces of both systems into their own, family cultural system. This process was made evident when one father talked about his children being both Sri Lankan and American. He stated that they had both cultures in them. The parental ethnotheories were particularly influenced by their child's school program. They relied on the teachers and other parents within the school to model, assist, and answer questions about their child's development. There was a separation between home culture and school culture that included language, food, social interaction, and discipline. This seemed especially true due to their child's being deaf. The deaf children in this study were enrolled in early intervention school programs. If they had been hearing, they would likely not have started school, full time, until kindergarten, which was older than most of the deaf children in this study. It adds a new dimension to their parenting practice and beliefs. Parenting a child who is deaf adds a new culture and language to their home and influences how they parent. The change starts by the parents' evolving understanding of deafness and what it means for their child. It evolved into them adjusting and reforming their parenting to best parent their deaf children within all of their participating cultural systems. This is also true for the deaf families, in a different way. All of the deaf families referenced life as a deaf person in their COO. They came to the US for better opportunities for themselves and their

families. Based on their experiences in cultural systems in the US, particularly the Deaf cultural system in the US, how they understood what it meant to raise a child who is deaf was different than their deaf peers from their COO. Many of them commented that deaf people in their COO felt sorry for them for having a deaf child, which is the opposite of how these parents felt. This could be, in part, by their experiences in the US, where many deaf parents are happy to have a deaf child and where they see and experience the opportunities for people who are deaf. Their parental ethnotheories were influenced by their experiences within the US Deaf culture.

Using Weisner's ecocultural theory, families' daily routines were examined to best understand the role of culture in their everyday lives. Examining the routine of the families provided insight into their values or revealed what they were doing in their routine versus what they want to be doing (Weisner, 1997). One hearing family remarked that opportunities are better in America, particularly for their deaf child, but the father has to work six long days a week to provide for his family and has very little time to spend with his family. A deaf family remarked that they value language teaching and learning for their deaf child, but had not considered how they intentionally teach or promote his language development until they were asked. Other families talked a lot about food (mealtimes, what they ate, how much they ate), discipline, togetherness, and homework. Looking into daily routines allowed for discussion on how the participants carry out what they believe about parenting. It was useful in helping the families to draw out what their routines reflect about their cultural values. Some families compared their routine in the US to their routine in their COO. This was an interesting perspective as it allowed for

insight into what they “carried over” into their new lives in the US and what they adopted now that they were in the US. Some of this was based on things like available resources, including food, money, family and community. Some was based on different cultural systems and how comfortable they were within each system. Parenting a deaf child impacted the routine of most of these families in ways such as getting their child to and from their school program, going for various doctor or therapy appointments, attending (or not attending) ASL classes, and how they communicated within the home.

Communication is tied to routine in this case because ASL is a visual language so ensuring eye contact or physical touch is important in communication. This can impact routine particularly when the parents are trying to talk to or get the attention of their deaf child while engaged in various activities such as cooking or driving. Applying this theory added to what we know about family language access for deaf children by going beyond what families say they believe about language to what they do in their daily routines. It offers insight on the languages of power and the language goals within the family.

Using this theoretical framework in combination with parental ethnotheories is a helpful way to better understand the experiences, beliefs, and parenting of immigrant families with young, deaf children. It reveals more about parenting and experiences by taking the conversation further than what the families reveal through conversation alone in terms of beliefs and values. Families are able to answer questions about what they value and what parenting for a deaf child is like for them. Adding the daily routine was an opportunity to affirm and examine this in a different way, though looking at their daily routines and the evidence of these values and practices. It brings understanding of how

families carry out their parenting beliefs and how they are carried out within their daily ecology.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The findings from this research have implications for policy and practice. This research points, foremost, to a need for better access to services and advice for immigrant families with young deaf children. This is consistent with research in the larger context with immigrant families with young (hearing) children (Adair & Tobin, 2008; Vesely & Ginsberg, 2011; Yosso, 2005). Each of these studies from the perspectives of immigrant families, suggests a lack of access to services and resources. Yosso (2005) discusses cultural capital which can include, among other things language and community support, and the greater the lack of cultural capital, the greater the need for better access. Though each state varies in regards to services offered, early intervention services are available for these children in each state in the US. However, as this study shows, many families remain unaware of what services are available to them and their deaf child. Early intervention is critical for young, deaf children, as it provides early language access, which is vital to success.

The study supports the need for states to directly address early intervention awareness and offer services to families with young deaf children. This work is already being done through the Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K) Bill initiative that has already passed in several states. However, this study highlights that immigrant families with young, deaf children need more access to information to ensure

their deaf child receives quality, timely services that include language development.

Immigration support services should be aware of the educational options available for families and should refer families as they come to the US and seek any assistance with their transition. Information about services should be available at medical offices and staff should be equipped to refer families to state early intervention services. The study showed that, while some early intervention professionals were promising to assist families find school programs for their child, there was little to no follow-through.

This study also implied the need for schools to better support engagement with immigrant families with young deaf children. This includes not only at the teacher level, but school wide, including administration, to build strong reciprocal relationships with families---the hallmark of strong family engagement (Halgunseth et al., 2009). Immigrant families are in a unique position as parents of children in schools that, most likely, look very different from their own schooling experiences and adding that the child is deaf further complicates this experience. Schools should be aware of and respond to the needs and experiences of these families. This study showed the role of schools as important in supporting parents in navigating parenting by: 1) providing services and information about services available, 2) framing how families viewed deaf people, including their deaf child, 3) supporting the family's need for an accessible community, 4) providing ASL instruction for the families, and 5) ensuring understanding of special education rights and law.

Schools, particularly teachers, have a very important role in family engagement with immigrant families. Many of these families take their cues from the teachers on how

they view their deaf child, as capable or incapable. This is critical and impacts the whole family. The family has to advocate for a range of services for their child and this can be very overwhelming. Schools can help to alleviate some of this by explaining what services are available, what the services provide, and how they can access them. Schools can also provide tutoring for their students of immigrant families who, in this study, admit that it is hard for them to assist with homework because of language barriers in both ASL and English. These children are Schools also can provide the family with ASL classes that are accessible to immigrant families. Providing incentive such as free courses, flexible courses, and even online courses may allow more families to participate in these courses. This will help the child have more access to language not only at school, but in the home and will also promote deeper family bonding through communication. This will also help the families feel more empowered and less intimidated at important events such as IEP/IFSP meetings that can carry a lot of technical and legal language. It is a process that is very new to them but very critical to the education and development of their child.

Immigrant families reported feeling isolated in the US compared to their COO. Schools can be more sensitive to this and provide opportunities for families such as mentorship programs, or more community events. Home visits are also important and could help these families feel more connected and part of a community raising their deaf child. Most of these families have overcome many obstacles and left what was familiar to them to come to the US. Many of the families in this study are working many long hours in hourly wage jobs to make ends meet. All of these families are firmly invested in their

child and the success of their child. School personnel should be sensitive to this try to alleviate some of this burden from families.

In summary, the services provided to the families from the schools can have a profound impact on the engagement experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children. This, in turn, can have a significant influence on the developmental, linguistic, and academic opportunities and achievement of the children.

Limitations of the Study

This study provided insight and useful data on the family engagement experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children. It is important to acknowledge and examine the limitations of this study.

First, common language was a limitation of this study. There were many countries and languages represented in this study. Very few of the participants in this study were fluent in English or ASL, so most of the interviews were conducted in a language that was not the participants first language. Half of the interviews used language translators. Triangulation was used to help ensure accuracy of the data collected by 1) repeating back to the families what I understood them to say, 2) by asking them, after transcription, to review the transcript for accuracy (this was only done for families that could read and write English), and 3) by asking native users, when available, to review the audio or video interview files and provide a second language translation, however, there is still a chance that some information was lost in translation. Not all of the interviews received this level of triangulation due to a lack of resources in finding or compensating the appropriate people to translate the audio interviews and printed transcripts. Also, the

translators bring their own perspectives and experiences that can impact what and how they translate the interview questions and the replies. This may impact the response translated from what the speaker intended. This includes, particularly, how the translator perceives deaf people. Their words for how they name the deaf and how they translate my questions and the family responses could be chosen based on these perceptions, which could be very negative. I was careful to talk about this with the interpreters and then with the families.

Another limitation of the study was the trust relationship between the interviewer and the participants. Each interview was approximately one hour long. This did not allow for a lot of time to build a strong rapport with the participants. Because the interviews were held in states all over the US, there was not enough funding or time to remain in the area long to build relationships. However, many of the participants had strong relationships with the mutual friend who referred them for the interview. We spent time talking about our relationship with that person, and that seemed to help. One of the participating families spoke the same language as the interviewer's nanny. When they called, the nanny spoke with the family. When the family met the interviewer, they seemed very at ease and spoke about the nanny and their conversation.

A related limitation was the interviewer's lack of knowledge of various cultural customs of each family. In most of the interviews, the interviewer entered the family's home. Some of the norms were familiar, as the interviewer has traveled extensively in Mexico and East Africa. However, some were not familiar. To help alleviate and any offense, the interviewer was careful to ask the mutual friend or others who know the

family about this. This was a very helpful measure so we were on the same page about the language that was intended by me and by the family.

The final limitation was that the families are from all over the world and does not represent how a particular cultural COO system may impact family engagement among immigrant families with young, deaf children. All of the families in this study migrated from countries that are considered developing countries, which may not represent the experiences of families that migrate from Western countries. This may impact how the families view their deaf child, navigate systems, and engage in their child's education.

Future Research Possibilities

This study points to the need for more research on this topic. There is growing research in immigrant families and children of immigrant families. This study shows that there needs to be growing research specifically looking at immigrant families with deaf children as their experiences are more complicated and, in some ways different than their peers.

The field of deaf education is largely under-researched as a field. Conducting more research on family engagement with both immigrant and non-immigrant parents with deaf children is critical and could be used to for comparison within and across various groups. This could help to identify similarities and differences in experiences and engagement between and among various families.

This study suggests that some deaf children of immigrant families will miss out on learning the culture of their home and COO because there is not a mutual language to access all of the information. It was suggested that schools play an important role in

teaching children about their cultural heritage. However, it also implied that families felt strongly that there was a separation between the school cultural system and their home cultural system. This separation can make it harder for their children to have the same access and advantages as their peers from non-immigrant parents (Valdés, 1996). Schools could and should do more to engage with immigrant families and decrease the feeling of separation. More research can be done to examine the role of schools in teaching children about their heritage culture from their COO.

Conclusion

The findings of this study are more than narratives of immigrant families as they journey through immigration and parenting a deaf child. They provide insight that can and should be applied in practice to help make the experiences for both the families and the schools more positive and productive. The population is changing and more and more classrooms have children with immigrant families. Teachers are not often prepared to know how to best work in collaboration with these families and the families are not sure what their role should or could be in the school or in the education of their child.

This study suggested that teachers are a very important part of the process of understanding parenting with a deaf child, yet many teachers are likely unaware of their ability to impact families in such a profound way. The study also suggests that many of the families want to do more to work with their child, but things like language access and academic achievement prevent these families from helping their children the way that they want to. Overall, the experiences of the families and their engagement in their child's education, both in the school and at home, was very positive, but the study suggested that

so much more could be happening and, therefore, this study should be expanded and attended to.

One family compared parenting their deaf child to “immigrating all over again”. These families are re-living the experience of learning a new language and navigating a new cultural system in addition to navigating parenting. The study suggested that the immigrant families often feel isolated, particularly in comparison to life in their COO. This could bring them to a place of feeling further alienated having to navigate this new cultural system while still grappling with life in the US.

Schools and immigration professionals and organizations could do a lot more to work with these families. This would not only help families to feel less isolated through parenting their deaf child, but, more importantly, would give the families the capital they need to communicate with their child and to better understand their world. This, ultimately, could be a factor in giving the child the recourses necessary for success: language, assistance with school work, and, most importantly, the support of their families who believe that they are not handicapped by their being deaf, but they are capable of doing anything and everything that they want.

Appendix A

IRB Approval Letter



Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

Research Hall, 4400 University Drive, MS 6D5, Fairfax, Virginia 22030
Phone: 703-993-5445; Fax: 703-993-9390

DATE: July 16, 2014

TO: Colleen Vesely, PhD
FROM: George Mason University IRB

Project Title: [624018-1] Family Engagement Among Immigrant Families with Young Deaf Children

SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT STATUS
DECISION DATE: July 16, 2014

REVIEW CATEGORY: Exemption category #2

Thank you for your submission of New Project materials for this project. The Office of Research Integrity & Assurance (ORIA) has determined this project is EXEMPT FROM IRB REVIEW according to federal regulations.

Please remember that all research must be conducted as described in the submitted materials.

Please note that any revision to previously approved materials must be submitted to the ORIA prior to initiation. Please use the appropriate revision forms for this procedure.

If you have any questions, please contact Karen Molsinger at 703-993-4208 or kmolsing@gmu.edu. Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within George Mason University IRB's records.

Appendix B

Informed Consent Form

Family Engagement Among Immigrant Families with Young Deaf Children

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

RESEARCH PROCEDURES

This research is being conducted to better understand the perspectives and experiences of immigrant families with young deaf children and how they engage in their child's education. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to participate in a one time, one hour interview.

RISKS

There are minimal foreseeable risks for participating in this research. It is very unlikely these could occur, but they could include feelings of frustration or struggle in raising your deaf child. Lists of support agencies will be provided if any family member wishes to further address these feelings and get more support.

BENEFITS

There are no benefits to you as a participant other than to further research in family engagement of immigrant families with young deaf children.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The data in this study will be confidential. Your name will not be included on the surveys and other collected data. A pseudonym will be used for your name, the names of your family members, and the your location (if applicable).

PARTICIPATION

Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from or stop your participation in the study at any time and for any reason. If you decide not to participate or if you withdraw from the study, there is no penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. There are no costs to you or any other party.

You will receive a \$25 gift card to a selected location of your choosing as an appreciation for your time.

CONTACT

This research is being conducted by Christi Batamula at George Mason University. She may be reached at [REDACTED] for questions or to report a research-related problem. Her faculty advisor is Dr. Colleen Vesely and she can be reached at [REDACTED]. You may contact the George Mason University Office of Research Integrity & Assurance at [REDACTED] if you have questions or comments regarding your rights as a participant in the research.

This research has been reviewed according to George Mason University procedures governing your participation in this research.

CONSENT

I have read this form, all of my questions have been answered by the research staff, and I agree to participate in this study. This study will be video and/or audio recorded for the sole purpose of allowing the researchers to ensure accuracy of information. Tapes will not be shared with anyone outside of the research team and will kept in a secure location. The video tapes will be destroyed five years after completion of the study.

_____ I agree to audio/video taping.

_____ I do not agree to audio/video taping.

Name

Date of Signature

Appendix C

Interview Questions

1. Tell me about your experiences immigrating to the United States.
2. Tell me about your experience finding out your child is deaf.
3. How has you're the identification of your child as deaf impacted your daily life?
 - a. How has it impacted you as a parent?
 - b. Has it changed you as a parent? How?
4. Describe a typical day in your family.
 - a. How does language use change (or does it change) throughout the day (both spoken, written, and signed language)?
 - b. How do you engage with your deaf child?
 - c. How do you support your (deaf) child's education at home?
5. Is your child enrolled in an early intervention program or school? Tell me about the program.
 - a. How do you engage with the school to support your child's education?
6. What do you believe is the role of the family in their child's education? What is the role of the school? The teachers? The administrators?

References

- Abberley, P. (1987). The concept of oppression and the development of a social theory of disability. *Disability, Handicap & Society*, 2(1), 5-19. doi: 10.1080/02674648766780021
- Adair, J., & Tobin, J. (2008). Listening to the voices of immigrant parents. In C. Genishi & A. L. Goodwin (Eds.), *Diversities in early childhood education: Rethinking and doing* (137-150). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Agar, M. (1994). *Language shock : Understanding the culture of conversation* (1st ed.). New York, NY: Wm. Morrow.
- Albrecht, P. (2011). *Culturally Responsive Parenting*. Retrieved from <http://www.urbanchildinstitute.org/articles/research-to-policy/practice/culturally-responsive-parenting>
- Anderson-Levitt, K. (2002a). *Teaching cultures : Knowledge for teaching first grade in France and the United States*. Cresskill, N.J.: Hampton Press.
- Anderson-Levitt, K. (2002b). Teaching culture as national and transnational: A response to teachers' work. *Educational Researcher*, 31(3),19-21. doi: 10.3102/0013189X031003019
- Babu, S. G. (2008). *Mothers' work in schooling children: Perspectives from immigrant Asian-Indian mothers* (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from US: ProQuest Information & Learning. (696-A, 2110).
- Baker, C. (2011). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (5th ed.). Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Baldwin, J., Faulkner, S., Hecht, M., & Lindsley, S. (2005). *Redefining culture: Perspectives across disciplines*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Berry, J.W. (2003). Conceptual approaches to acculturation. In K. Chun, P. Balls-Organista, & G. Marin (Eds.), *Acculturation: Advances in theory, measurement and applied research* (pp. 17–37). Washington, DC: APA Press.

- Bouffard, S. & Fischel, J. (2008). Thinking big: A new framework for family involvement, policy, practice, and research. *The Evolution Exchange*, 14(1&2), 2-5.
- Borjas, George. 2011. Poverty and Program Participation among Immigrant Children. *The Future of Children*, 21(1), 247-266. doi: 10.1353/foc.2011.0006
- Bryant, A., & Charmaz, K. (2007). *Grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Calderon, R., & Greenberg, M. (2012). Social and Emotional Development of Deaf Children: Family, School, and Program Effects. *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Retrieved from <http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199750986.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199750986-e-013>.
- Carreón, G. P., Drake, C., & Barton, A. C. (2005). The importance of presence: Immigrant parents' school engagement experiences. *American Educational Research Journal*, 42(3), 465-498. doi: 10.3102/00028312042003465
- Center for Disease Control. (2013). *Hearing loss in children: Data and Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/hearingloss/data.html>
- Charmaz, K. & Balgrave, L. (2012). Qualitative interviewing and grounded theory analysis. In J. Gubrium, A. Marvasti, & K. McKinney (Eds). *The SAGE handbook of interview research: The complexity of the craft* (p. 347-365). Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Cherlin, A. (1999). Going to extremes: Family structure, children's well-being, and social sciences. *Demography*, 36(4), 421-428. doi: 10.2307/2648081
- Collins, P. H. (1998). It's all in the family: Intersections of gender, race, and nation. *Hypatia*, 13(3), 62-82. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3810699>
- Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2007). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory*. Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications.
- Craig, S., Hull, K., Haggart, A. G., & Perez-Selles, M. (2000). Promoting cultural competence through teacher assistance teams. *Teaching exceptional children*, 32(3), 6-13. Retrieved from a44903653db145b3e2cdd974ecbaf1f8.pdf

- Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved from <http://doc1.lbfli.li/aca/FLMF022364.pdf>
- D'Andrade, R. G., & Strauss, C. (1992). *Human motives and cultural models*. New York, New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Elizalde-Utnick, G. (2010). Immigrant families: Strategies for school support. *Principal Leadership*, 10(5), 12-16. Retrieved from <http://www.principals.org/KnowledgeCenter/Publications/PrincipalLeadership.aspx>
- Epstein, J., Coates, L., Salinas, K. C., Sanders, M., & Simon, B. (2008). *School, family, and community partnerships: Your handbook for action* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Erting, C. (1982). *Deafness, communication, and social identity : An anthropological analysis of interaction among parents, teachers, and deaf children in a preschool*. (Doctoral dissertation). American University, Washington, DC.
- Fillmore, L. W. (1991). When learning a second language means losing the first. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 6(3), 323-346. doi: [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006\(05\)80059-6](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(05)80059-6)
- Ford, K. (1990). Duration of residence in the United States and fertility of U. S. immigrants. *International Migration Review*, 24(1), 34-68. doi: 10.2307/2546671
- Fortuny, K., Hernandez, D. J., Chaudry, A. (2010). *Young children of immigrants: The leading edge of America's future*. Washington, DC: The Urban Institute.
- Freeman, B., Dieterich, C., & Rak, C. (2002). The struggle for language: Perspectives and practices of urban parents with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 147(5), 37-44. doi: [10.1353/aad.2012.0237](http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/aad.2012.0237)
- Fuligni, A.J., & Fuligni, A.S. (2007). Immigrant families and the educational development of their children. In J.E. Lansford, K. Deater-Deckard, & M.H. Bornstein (Eds.) *Immigrant families in contemporary society* (p. 231-249). New York, NY: Guilford.
- Gonzalez-Mena, J. (2008). *Diversity in early care and education*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Gougeon, T. D. (1993). Urban schools and immigrant families: Teacher perspectives. *The Urban Review*, 25(4), 251-287. doi:10.1007/BF01111851

- Grosjean, F. (2010). Bilingualism, biculturalism, and deafness. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 13(2), 133-145. doi:10.1080/13670050903474051
- Harkness, S., & Super, C. M. (1996). *Parents cultural belief systems: Their origins, expressions, and consequences*. New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- Harkness, S. & Super, C.M. (2006). Themes and variations: Parental ethnotheories in western cultures. In K.H. Rubin & O.B. Chung (Eds.), *Parenting Beliefs, Behaviors, and Parent-Child Relations* (pp. 61- 79). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Harkness, S., & Super, C. M. (2013). Culture and early childhood development. In P. R. Britto & P. L. Engle (Eds.), *Handbook of Early Childhood Development Research and its Impact on Global Policy* (pp. 142-160). Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Harkness, S., Super, C. M., & van Tijen, N. (2000). Individualism and the "western mind" reconsidered: American and dutch parents' ethnotheories of the child. *New Directions for Child & Adolescent Development*, 2000(87), 23-39. doi: 10.1002/cd.23220008704
- Halgunseth, L. (2009). Family engagement, diverse families, and early childhood education programs: An integrated review of the literature. *YC Young Children*, 64(5), 56-58. Retrieved from <http://www.buildinitiative.org/portals/0/uploads/documents/resource-center/diversity-and-equity-toolkit/halgunseth.pdf>
- Hernandez, D. (2004). Demographic change and the life circumstances of immigrant families. *Future of Children*, 14(2), 16-46. doi: 10.2307/1602792
- Hernandez, D. (2009). Generational patterns in the US: American Community Survey and other sources. In *Proceedings of the Conference on the Immigrant Paradox in Education and Behavior: Is becoming American a developmental risk*. Providence, RI.
- Henderson, D., & Hendershoot, A. (1991). ASL and the family system. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 136(4), 325-329. doi: [10.1353/aad.2012.0546](https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2012.0546)
- Hernandez, D., & National Research Council (US) Committee on the Health and Adjustment of Immigrant Children and Families. (1999). *Children of immigrants: Health, adjustment, and public assistance*. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

- Hernandez, D., Denton, N., & Macartney, S. (2007). Family circumstances of children in immigrant families: Looking to the future of America. In Lansford, J., Deater-Deckard, K., Bornstein, M. (Eds), *Immigrant families in contemporary society*. Duke series in child development and public policy, (p. 9-29). New York, NY, US: Guilford Press.
- Holland, D., & Quinn, N. (1987). *Cultural models in language and thought*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Horejes, T. (2012). *Social constructions of deafness: Examining deaf languacultures in education*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Hulsebosch, P., & Myers, L. R. (2002). Minority parents as cultural mediators for education: Deaf parents mentoring hearing parents of deaf children. *School Community Journal*, 12(1), 73-89. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/195456458?accountid=27346>
- Hyde, M., Punch, R., & Komesaroff, L. (2010). Coming to a decision about cochlear implantation: Parents making choices for their deaf children. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 15(2), 162-178. doi: 10.1093/deafed/enq004
- Jeynes, W. H. (2005). A meta-analysis of the relation of parental involvement to urban elementary school student academic achievement. *Urban education*, 40(3), 237-269. doi: 10.1177/0042085905274540
- Katz, L. L. (1991). Cultural scripts: The home-school connection. *Early Child Development and Care*, 73, 95-102. doi:10.1080/0300443910730110
- Kelley, M., Power, T., & Wimbush, D. (1992). Determinants of disciplinary practices in low-income black mothers. *Child Development*, 63, 573-582. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8624.1992.tb01647.x
- Kiyaga, N. B., & Moores, D. F. (2003). Deafness in Sub-Saharan Africa. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 148(1), 18-24. doi: [10.1353/aad.2003.0004](https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2003.0004)
- Koester, L.S., & Meadow-Orlans, K.P. (1990). Parenting a deaf child: Stress, strength, and support. In D.F. Moores & K.P. Meadow-Orlans (Eds.), *Educational and developmental aspects of deafness* (p. 299-320). Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Kotchick, B. A., & Forehand, R. (2002). Putting parenting in perspective: A discussion of the contextual factors that shape parenting practices. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 11(3), 255-269. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1023/A:1016863921662>

- Ladd, P., (2003). *Understanding deaf culture: In search of deafhood*. Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Lane, H. L., Hoffmeister, R., & Bahan, B. J. (1996). *A journey into the deaf-world*. San Diego, CA: DawnSignPress.
- Lange, C. M., Lane-Outlaw, S., Lange, W. E., & Sherwood, D. L. (2013). American Sign Language/English bilingual model: A longitudinal study of academic growth. *Journal of deaf studies and deaf education*, 18, 532-544. doi:10.1093/deafed/enq069
- Lee, P. (1996). Cognitive development in bilingual children: A case for bilingual instruction in early childhood education. *Bilingual Research Journal*, 20(3), 499-522. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/222008824?accountid=14541>
- LeVine R. (1980). A cross-cultural perspective on parenting. In M.D. Fantini & R. Cardenas (Eds.), *Parenting in a multicultural society* (p. 17-40). New York, NY: Longman.
- Liang, X., Fuller, B., & Singer, J.D. (2000). Ethnic differences in child care selection: The influence of family structure, parental practices, and home language. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly*, 15, 357- 384. doi: [10.1016/S0885-2006\(00\)00071-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0885-2006(00)00071-5)
- Luster, T., & Ogakaki, L. (1993). *Parenting: An ecological perspective*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Marrero, C. (2009). *Immigration status, parental involvement, and educational achievement among Puerto Ricans*. (Doctoral dissertation) Retrieved from US: ProQuest Information & Learning. (6912.4631).
- Marschark, M. (2009). *Raising and educating a deaf child: A comprehensive guide to the choices, controversies, and decisions faced by parents and educators*. Cambridge, MA: Oxford University Press.
- Mathers, C., Smith, A., & Concha, M. (2000). Global burden of hearing loss in the year 2000. *Global burden of Disease*, 18(4), 1-30. Retrieved from http://www.who.int/healthinfo/statistics/bod_hearingloss.pdf
- Matthews, H., & Ewen, D. (2006). *Reaching all children? Understanding early care and education participation among immigrant families*. Washington, DC: Center for Law and Social Policy.

- Maxwell, J. (2011). Paradigms or toolkits? Philosophical and methodological positions as heuristics for mixed methods research. *Mid-Western Educational Researcher*, 24(2), 27-30. Retrieved from <http://www.mwera.org/MWER/documents/MWER-2011-Spring-24-2.pdf#page=31>
- Maxwell, J. (2012a). *A realist approach for qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2012b). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Maxwell, J. & Chmiel, M. (in press). Generalization in and from qualitative analysis. *SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Analysis*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Mayberry, R. I., Lock, E., & Kazmi, H. (2002). Linguistic ability and early language exposure. *Nature*, 417.6884, 38. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/417038a>
- Meadow-Orlans, K. P., Sass-Lehrer, M., & Mertens, D. M. (2003). *Parents and their deaf children: The early years*. Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Medina, C. A. (2011). *Low-income, newly-arrived, Latino immigrant parents, school choice and information*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from US: ProQuest Information & Learning. (725.1776).
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- Mitchiner, J. C., & Sass-Lehrer, M. (2011). My child can have more choices: Reflections of deaf mothers on cochlear implants for their children. In R. Paludneviene & I. W. Leigh (Eds.), *Cochlear implants: Evolving perspectives* (pp. 71-94). Washington, DC: Gallaudet University Press.
- Moore, D. F. & Miller, M. S. (2009). *Deaf people around the world : Educational and social perspectives*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.
- Nakamura, K. (2006). *Deaf in Japan: Signing and the politics of identity*. Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press.
- National Association of the Deaf. (n.d.). *Position statement on schools for the deaf*. Retrieved from <http://www.nad.org/issues/education/k-12/position-statement-schools-deaf>
- National Association for the Education of Young Children. (1993). *A conceptual*

framework for early childhood professional development. Retrieved from www.naeyc.org/files/naeyc/file/positions/PSCONF98.PDF

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders. (2010). *Quick Statistics*. Retrieved from <http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/health/statistics/Pages/quick.aspx>

Nassozi, B. Moore, D. (2003). Deafness in sub-saharan Africa. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 148(1), 18-24. doi: [10.1353/aad.2003.0004](https://doi.org/10.1353/aad.2003.0004)

Niehuys, T. & Tikotin, J. (1983). Pre-speech communication in hearing and hearing impaired children. *Journal of the British Association of Teachers of the Deaf*, 7(6), 182-194.

Nikolarazi, M., & Hadjikakou, K. (2006). The role of educational experiences in the development of deaf identity. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 11(4), 477-492. doi: 10.1093/deafed/enl003

Ochocka, J., & Janzen, R. (2008). Immigrant Parenting: A New Framework of Understanding. *Journal Of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, 6(1), 85-111. doi:10.1080/15362940802119286

Padden, C. A., & Humphries, T. (1990). *Deaf in America*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Parmar, P., Harkness, S., & Super, C. M. (2004). Asian and Euro-American parents' ethnotheories of play and learning: Effects on preschool children's home routines and school behaviour. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 28(2), 97-104. doi: 10.1080/01650250344000307

Peters, S. J. (2007). "Education for all?" A historical analysis of international inclusive education policy and individuals with disabilities. *Journal of disability policy studies*, 18(2), 98-108. doi: 10.1177/10442073070180020601

Ravitch, S.M. and Riggan, M. (2016). *Reason and Rigor: How Conceptual Frameworks Guide Research.*, (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Reagan, T. (2002). Toward an "archaeology of deafness": Etic and emic constructions of identity in conflict. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 1(1), 41-66. doi: [10.1207/S15327701JLIE0101_4](https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327701JLIE0101_4)

Rolland, J. (1994). *Families, illness, and disability*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Ryan, C., & Siebens, J. (2012). *Educational attainment in the United States: 2009*.

Population Characteristics. United States Senses Bureau. Retrieved from <http://www.census.gov/prod/2012pubs/p20-566.pdf>

- Sass-Lehrer, M., Mertens, D. M., & Meadow-Orlans, K. (2003). *Parents and their deaf children: The early years*. Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press.
- Senghas, R. J., & Monaghan, L. (2002). Signs of their times: Deaf communities and the culture of language. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 31(1), 69-97. doi: 10.1146/annurev.anthro.31.020402.101302
- Shields, M., & Behrman, R. (2004). Children of immigrant families: Analysis and recommendation. *Future of Children*, 14(2), 4-15. Los Altos, CA: The David and Lucile Packard Foundation.
- Shore, B. (1996). *Culture in mind: Cognition, culture, and the problem of meaning*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Shonkoff, J. P., & Meisels, S. J. (Eds.). (2000). *Handbook of early childhood intervention*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
- Silverman, D. (Ed.). (2016). *Qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Spindler, G., & Spindler, L. (1987). Cultural dialogue and schooling in Schoenhausen and Roseville: A comparative analysis. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 18(1), 1-16. doi: 10.1525/aeq.1987.18.1.04x0758d
- Steinberg, A. G., Davila, J. R., Collazo, J., Loew, R. C., & Fischgrund, J. E. (1997). "A little sign and a lot of love...": Attitudes, perceptions, and beliefs of hispanic families with deaf children. *Qualitative Health Research*, 7(2), 202-222. doi: 10.1177/104973239700700203
- Steinberg, A. G. (2001). We know some things: Parent-adolescent relationships in retrospect and prospect. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 11(1), 1-19. doi: 10.1111/1532-7795.00001
- Steinberg, A., Bain, L., Li, Y., Delgado, G., & Ruperto, V. (2003). Decisions Hispanic families make after the identification of deafness. *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, 8(3), 291-314. doi:10.1093/deafed/eng016
- Super, C. M., & Harkness, S. (1986). The developmental niche: A conceptualization at the interface of child and culture. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 9(4), 545-569. doi: 10.1177/016502548600900409

- Takanishi, R. (2004). Leveling the playing field Supporting Immigrant children from birth to eight. *Future of Children* 14(2), 61-79. doi: 10.2307/1602794
- Tobin, J., Wu, D., & Davidson, D. (1989). *Preschool in three cultures: Japan, China, and the United States*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.
- Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged?. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 102(4), 257-271. doi: [10.3200/JOER.102.4.257-271](https://doi.org/10.3200/JOER.102.4.257-271)
- United States Department of Education & Office for Civil Rights. (2010). *Free appropriate public education for students with disabilities: Requirements under section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973*. Retrieved from <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/edlite-FAPE504.html>
- The Urban Institute (2006). Children of immigrants facts and figures. Retrieved from <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm?ID=900955>
- Valdés, G. (1996). *Con Respeto. Bridging the Distances between Culturally Diverse Families and Schools. An Ethnographic Portrait*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press
- Vandenbroeck, M. (2006). Globalisation and privatization: The impact on childcare policy and practice. Working paper 38. The Hague: The Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Vesely, C. K., Goodman, R. D., Ewaida, M., & Kearney, K. B. (2015). A better life? Immigrant mothers' experiences building economic security. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 36(4), 514-530. doi: 10.1007/s10834-014-9422-3
- Vesely, C. K., Goodman, R. D., & Scurlock, S. (2014). Turning points and transitions: the role of family in women's immigration experiences. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*, 5(2), 308-331.
- Vesely, C. K., Ewaida, M., & Kearney, K. B. (2013). Capitalizing on early childhood education: Low-income immigrant mothers' use of early childhood education to build human, social, and navigational capital. *Early Education & Development*, 24(5), 744-765. doi: [10.1080/10409289.2012.725382](https://doi.org/10.1080/10409289.2012.725382)
- Vesely, C.K., & Ginsberg, M.R. (2011). Strategies and practices for working with immigrant families in early education programs. *Young Children*, 66(1), 84-89. Retrieved from c6d1bedf37622f38d580a20329fa9166.pdf

- Vodounou, V. (2008). *The Incredible Journey of Victor Vodounou*. El Cajon, CA: CSN Books.
- Weisner, T. S. (1997). The ecocultural project of human development: Why ethnography and its findings matter. *Ethos*, 25(2), 177-190. doi: 10.1525/eth.1997.25.2.177
- Weiss, H., Caspe, M., & Lopez, M. (2006). Family involvement in early childhood education. family involvement makes a difference. *Family Involvement Research Digest*, 1. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project.
- Wight, V. R., Chau, M., & Aratani, Y. (2010). *Who Are America's Poor Children?: The Official Story*. New York, NY: National Center for Children in Poverty.
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Deafness and hearing loss*. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs300/en/>
- Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race ethnicity and education*, 8(1), 69-91. doi: [10.1080/1361332052000341006](https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006)
- Zong, J., Batalova, J. (2016, April 14). Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States. Retrieved from <http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#Children with Immigrant Parents>

Biography

Christi Batamula graduated from Center High School, Monaca, Pennsylvania, in 1996. She received her Bachelor of Arts from Geneva College in 2000. She received her Master of Arts in Deaf Education from Gallaudet University in 2002. She was employed as a teacher in various schools around the country before becoming a faculty member in the Department of Education at Gallaudet University in Washington, DC in the Fall 2009.