

**CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY? STRENGTHS AND RESOURCES OF  
CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY DIVERSE YOUNG CHILDREN AND  
THEIR FAMILIES: HOME, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY BELIEFS**

by

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A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

(Human Development, Learning, and Culture)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

April 2020

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Challenge or Opportunity? Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
by P. Jane Wakefield for

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## **Abstract**

The strengths and resources available to children from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) families have often been ignored as important contributions to school success, suggesting a divide exists between our knowledge of children's lives and educational policy and practice. This descriptive embedded case study, set in an urban school in a CALD neighbourhood, addresses this divide by examining the perspectives of stakeholders about those strengths and resources. Specifically, the study examines family, community, and school beliefs about the strengths and resources that CALD children and families bring to children's transition to the first year of school. Bourdieu's concepts of family habitus and cultural capital in considering children's strengths and resources and Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework to attend to the developing child's concentric contexts, along with reinterpretations of Bourdieu, informed the study's approach to the positive resources that children can contribute to schooling, through their families and communities.

Data sources included demographic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with 34 participants. The interview findings were coded into nine descriptive themes across participant groups which were subsequently categorized and presented under four constructs drawn from the study's theoretical and research framework:

- 1) Negotiating Cultural Identity

- 2) Opportunities to Access Capital: Barriers and Facilitators
- 3) Roles and Responsibilities in Supporting CALD Children and Families
- 4) Practices that Support CALD Children and Families

A description of beliefs and expectations about this topic helps shed light upon how the strengths and resources that CALD children and families bring to schooling can help enhance educational opportunity. It also points the way to the consideration of collaborative and culturally responsive practices that can reduce inequities across children's contexts. The perspectives shared by participants in this study provided valuable insight into the beliefs that family, school, and community stakeholders hold about the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. These beliefs also point the way toward more contextually and culturally nuanced insights into the multiple levels of interactions amongst families, schools, and communities.

## Lay Summary

The strengths and resources available to children from culturally and linguistically diverse families have often been ignored as important contributions to school success. This descriptive case study, set in an urban school in a culturally and linguistically diverse neighbourhood, explores the beliefs of families of young children, school personnel, and associated community members about those strengths and resources. Analysis of interviews revealed that *maintaining home language, engaging with culture, and social inclusion* emerged as major themes that families could access in negotiating cultural identity and accessing capital to assist children in successful school experiences. Home, school, and community roles and responsibilities for supporting children's development and preparing them for school were also identified together with the kinds of collaborative practices needed to support diverse children and families. Implications highlight the need for strengthened communication and collaborative relationships amongst family, school, and community, together with more intentional culturally responsive practices.

## **Preface**

The author was responsible for all the aspects entailed in developing the study, including: the conceptualization and design of the study, collecting and analyzing the data, and reporting the findings under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Ford (supervisor), Dr. Jim Anderson, and Dr. Margaret Early. This study received approval from the University of British Columbia Behavioural Research Ethics Board (certificate number H11-03387) and the participating school district.

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## Glossary

To provide clarity and precision of expression, a set of terms particular to this study's scope, context, aims, and questions will be defined and used in specific ways.

**Beliefs and expectations.** A belief is something that is accepted, considered to be true, or held as an opinion that is not immediately susceptible to rigorous proof (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Expectations are a subtype of beliefs that can sometimes be expressed in the form of assigning roles and responsibilities to actors in contexts. In this dissertation, stakeholder beliefs about strengths and resources of culturally and linguistically diverse children and families and expectations about roles and responsibilities for supporting young children's school transition are described.

**Culturally and linguistically diverse.** Culturally and linguistically diverse in the context of the present study refers to children and families with cultural heritages, racial and ethnic identities, and home languages used that diverge from dominant Anglo-Canadian culture. The study took place in a school where English is the language of instruction, and includes families who may speak English as a home language, but who also may have a cultural heritage that significantly differs from mainstream society. Differences exist within groups including multiple countries of origin, ethnicity, and linguistic and cultural identities.

**Deficit perspective.** For the purposes of this study a deficit perspective is a view that individuals from some linguistic or cultural groups, or both, lack the ability to

achieve just because of their linguistic or cultural background (Labov, 1970; Silverman, 2011).

**Family.** The use of the term *family* will be used here to describe all family members and other adults closely involved in the child's life, including extended family members. In this study, although family participants consisted solely of parents, the use of the term *parents* in the text is purely descriptive and does not imply a distinctive sampling category.

**Family involvement and family engagement.** The two terms are used to characterize the contribution of families to their children's learning. Family (or parent) involvement is a term frequently used with many different interpretations. However, its use has been critiqued for a lack of clarity and a focus on what the family or parent can do to support the school efforts." A relatively more recent term, family engagement, implies a degree of power-sharing or equality for parents in their children's learning and school experiences and is viewed by many as a more inclusive term.

**Perspective.** Perspective refers to a particular attitude towards or way of regarding something; a point of view (Stevenson, 2015). I will use the terms *perspective* and *point of view* (and its derivative *viewpoint*) as synonyms in this study.

**Stakeholders.** Stakeholders are those who may be affected by, have an interest in, or have an effect on human undertaking. The undertaking studied here is supporting children in their transition to kindergarten. Hence in this study, the term

“stakeholder” will be used to refer to the members of each of the three groups selected for examination in the research: family, school, and community who could be expected to be affected by or to affect children’s transition to kindergarten. Participants in this study are representatives from each of the 3 stakeholder groups in this case study.

**Strengths perspectives.** “Strengths-based approaches” to research and practice, originating in social work, place high value upon the capacity, skills, knowledge, connections, and potential in individuals and communities. While the current study makes no claim to adopt a strengths-based approach to research, it nonetheless investigates the topic of beliefs about culturally and linguistically diverse children’s and families’ strengths (and resources). Some of the study’s findings are discussed in the light of recent research that focusses on the strengths of these children and their families.

**Strengths and resources.** While the terms strengths and resources sometimes overlap, the primary distinction between them in this study is that strengths are internal attributes of the individual or group (e.g. bilingualism) and resources are external supports to those strengths (e.g. extended family members) (Kiyama & Rios-Aguilar, 2018).



## Acknowledgements

First, to all of the participants in this study, your deep interest in this research and time spent sharing your candid thoughts and concerns with me was invaluable. It has been a privilege to hear your perspectives as families, school, and community members living and working in a culturally and linguistic diverse community.

And to my research supervisor, Dr. Laurie Ford, your advice and feedback ensured this study was carried out with attention to detail and helped me to meet the challenges throughout the process. To my committee members, Dr. Jim Anderson and Dr. Margaret Early, my heartfelt appreciation: your deep insights and thoughtful questions pushed my thinking about research and practices that seek out opportunities to honour diversity in meaningful ways.

I also appreciate the support this research received from a UBC Hampton Fund Research Grant to Dr. Laurie Ford, as well as for graduate student funding from the UBC Faculty of Education and Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology and Special Education.

I'm also indebted to Dr. Kristi Jackson of Queri and Dr. Pat Bazeley of Research Support Pty Limited for sharing their expertise in computer-assisted qualitative data analysis, particularly as it pertained to my study. My appreciation also extends to friends and colleagues both at UBC and in the DoctoralNet community, whose rich collegial conversations influenced my thinking and continued learning. I am especially

grateful to Dr. Margot Filipenko, (my yoga buddy), whose generosity and friendship provided constant support through the “ups and downs” of working on this dissertation.

This journey towards a PhD has been long and filled with many challenges. I could not have done it without the unwavering love and support of my husband and our amazing children. Joanna and Graham, your unshakable enthusiasm and pride in my educational endeavours filled me with encouragement and determination to make it to the finish line. Finally, Ken, none of this would have been possible without your genuine curiosity in my work, patience, optimism, and steadfast belief in me.

*In memory of my mother, Pat Wakefield, a lifelong educator who worked tirelessly to help and encourage others to welcome diversity and celebrate its offerings. Throughout my life, she instilled in me the importance of compassion, commitment, a sense of humour, and using privilege as a way to provide opportunities for others.*

## **Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study**

Culture takes diverse forms across time and space. This diversity is embodied in the uniqueness and plurality of the identities of the groups and societies making up humankind. As a source of exchange, innovation, and creativity, cultural diversity is as necessary for humankind as biodiversity is for nature. In this sense, it is the common heritage of humanity and should be recognized and affirmed for the benefit of present and future generations.

—(UNESCO, 2001 Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity)

### **1.1 Background and Rationale**

While multiculturalism is considered to be a defining feature of Canadian society and policy (e.g. Canadian Multiculturalism Act, RSC 1985) which is reinforced in the Canadian Charter (Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms), children and their families often experience barriers in obtaining appropriate educational services because of cultural and linguistic differences. Such families also experience barriers to understanding and acting upon the information they receive about the school's expectations for their support of their child's learning needs (Jacob & Jordan, 1993). For example, in school systems in which the language of instruction is English, parents are often instructed to read with their children in English, ignoring the different cultural contexts in which children already engage in language and literacy practices with their families (Auerbach, 1995; Gregory et al., 2004). Educational beliefs and practices as well as structures (Au & Raphael, 2000; Boske & Benavente-McEnery, 2012; Brooker, 2015; Rogoff et al., 2017) sanctioned by educational institutions and systems, may not be familiar or practical for some families and may lead to inequitable treatment of children

even in the most well-intentioned schools. Moreover, schools, by focussing on what they perceive as children's and families' vulnerabilities or deficits, can unwittingly overlook the *strengths and resources* that children, their families, and their communities bring to the school experience (Boske & Benavente-McEnery, 2012; Gregory, 2017; Gregory et al., 2004).

Conceptualizing children's, families', and communities' cultural and linguistic diversity from a strengths and resources perspective (Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; González et al., 2005; Rogoff et al., 2017; Yosso, 2005), rather than from either a vulnerability or a deficit viewpoint with its concurrent generalizations and stereotypes, constitutes a more contemporary way of approaching the research with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities (see Gutiérrez, 2016; Valencia, 2010). A focus on vulnerability has important consequences for how we think about competence in terms of what image of the child is constructed by the school, by the family, or by the individual child, and how identities are negotiated amongst these actors (Cummins & Early, 2011; Luke, 2010; Siemund et al., 2013). For example, speaking a language in addition to English is sometimes devalued rather than viewed as an educational asset and consequently 'remediated' to the point of language loss rather than maintenance, let alone active encouragement (Brown, 2016; Gadsden et al., 2009). It is therefore important both from a societal and an educational perspective, to examine critically

those belief systems and institutional practices that may help or hinder children that come from CALD families and communities to succeed in school.

Many children from CALD backgrounds may be guided along different developmental pathways from their 'majority' peers, to those more in line with the cultural norms and values of their family's home communities (Bornstein & Bornstein, 2007; Hyun, 1998; Rogoff, 2003; Wise & deSilva, 2007). These pathways may not necessarily be always optimal for inclusion in mainstream society. For example, cultural opportunities and expectations to participate intensively in family and community activities such as seasonal visits to a homeland can be at odds with the attendance expectations of schools. Even those families from a cultural background where high academic performance is expected and nurtured may face disapproval for not following privileged 'developmentally appropriate practices' such as encouraging their child to engage in play-based activities (Brooker & Yelland, 2005; Cannella & Viruru, 1997; Li, 2006; Mallory & New, 1994; Ogbu, 1992; Roopnarine, 2012).

## **1.2 The Dissertation Problem and its Research Context**

Historically, both the research on, and practice of working with CALD children and families have emphasized their challenges. Few studies have focused on children's first transition to school from the diverse perspectives of family, community, and school. Because of the emphasis in the research and in practice on the challenges faced by these children and their families and those who work with them, there is not a clear

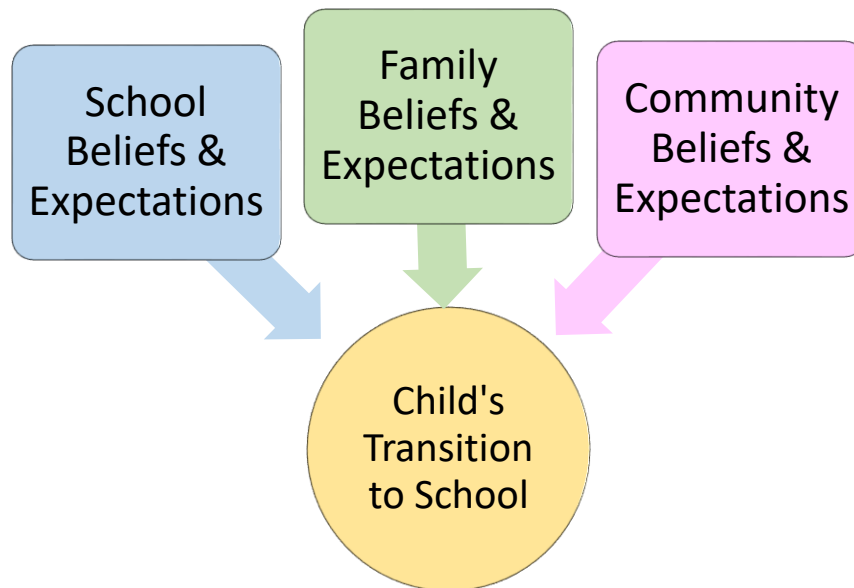
understanding of the strengths and resources these young learners and their families are able to access when making the transition to school.

This dissertation study was part of a larger project designed to address the question of how home, school, and community beliefs and expectations about the strengths and resources of young CALD kindergarten-aged children and their families matches with the kinds of practices that schools and communities use to identify and build upon those strengths and resources in helping the children transition to their first year of school.

### **1.3 Research Purpose and Objectives**

Within the broader framework of the larger study, the main emphasis of the present study is on describing and discussing the beliefs held by CALD families, school personnel, and community-based stakeholders directly involved with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families regarding the strengths and resources of young children and their families entering school. It was hoped that orienting conversations with participants to the topic of strengths and resources, rather than to deficits and challenges would allow participants to consider opportunities to reduce inequity and enhance children's educational success. A descriptive embedded case study approach was used, with families and school- and community-based stakeholders affiliated within one school, with the specific **purpose** of exploring the similarities and differences amongst the participants' beliefs and expectations. The

**objectives** of this first study were to examine family, community, and school beliefs regarding the strengths and resources of young CALD children and their families, including their expectations for preparing young children for a successful transition to school as illustrated in Figure 1.1.



*Figure 1.1.* Beliefs about the strengths and resources of CALD children and families and expectations for transition to school.

Therefore the primary aim in this study was to gain an understanding of the varying perspectives of the different stakeholder groups and to explore how that information can be used constructively to enhance the educational experiences for those children (Legare & Harris, 2016). A secondary aim in the study was to invite participants, through the use of strengths-oriented language and questioning, to perceive where possible the cultural and linguistic diversity of children and their



families and communities in positive terms and further, to envision opportunities to use that diversity as a resource that could enhance young children's transition to school.

#### **1.4 Delimitations**

External factors made it necessary to limit the size and the scope of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Thus, I recognize that the research findings for this study may not be universally applied to all CALD families, schools, and communities. Nevertheless, findings may be applicable in similar contexts elsewhere because transferability – not generalizability – is the focus of qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Shenton, 2004; Suri, 2011). This study included the following delimitations:

1. Purposive sampling was used to retrieve a selection of CALD families with kindergarten-aged children, along with school- and community-based stakeholders directly involved with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families connected to one elementary school located in a culturally and linguistically diverse community in one school district.
2. The school was chosen on the basis of the principal's identification of school practices to support cultural and linguistic diversity and commitment to participate in the study.
3. The study is descriptive in scope and purpose. Therefore, the study is not intended to contribute to methodological debates within qualitative inquiry. Nor can this

study determine how subfields of the constructivist research paradigm such as social constructionism should best be categorized.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The following interrelated research questions guided this study:

1. What are the unique and shared beliefs that families, and school- and community-based stakeholders have about supporting the strengths and resources of young culturally and linguistically diverse children and families?
2. What are the expectations about the roles and responsibilities of family, school, and community in preparing young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds for their transition to school?
3. What are stakeholders' beliefs about school and community practices that could support culturally and linguistically diverse families in helping young children transition to school?

### **1.6 Significance of the Study**

I believe that the findings of this study will make an important contribution to the field of education in the three contexts studied, home, school, and community. By learning more about the beliefs of family, school, and community stakeholders involved in children's transition to school, particularly those from CALD backgrounds, society can support and enhance mutual efforts to capitalize on those children's learning strengths and resources.

### **1.6.1 Family**

Involving families more closely in schooling may assist both families and teachers not only to develop greater knowledge of one another's beliefs and practices around learning and development but also to understand the way each defines and values learning. Home-school-community partnerships may provide families with greater opportunities not only to observe and understand the learning practices that schools support but also to share their expertise and resources and participate more fully in their children's education (Cairney, 2000; Cairney & Ruge, 1998; Christenson & Reschly, 2010; Li, 2009; Vazquez-Nuttall et al., 2006; Verdon et al., 2016; Wong, 2015). This ultimately could empower individuals to take their place more confidently in society.

### **1.6.2 School**

Through collaborative and participatory discussions, educators may identify successful strategies to enable them to examine and study the linguistic, social, and cultural resources of their students (as used at school, at home, and in the community). They may also be sensitized to reflect and expand upon educational experiences and practices, while potentially generate new knowledge (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 1999). Fuller understanding of family and community beliefs about children's learning and development can enable schools to adjust practices to build on the strengths of families

from diverse social, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds in order to shape educational and social outcomes in 21st century Canadian contexts.

### **1.6.3 Community**

Communities may be able to provide families and schools with support and liaison in understanding and building upon each other's practices (J. Anderson & Morrison, 2011). Accurate descriptions of community members' beliefs and expectations about such practices that acknowledge and support culturally and linguistically diverse children's strengths and resources (Bryan, 2005; Iannacci, 2015; Kana'iaupuni, 2005; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Moll & Gonzalez, 2004; Pianta, 2002) will assist all actors to build community capacity and enhance both social and cultural capital.

## **1.7 Organization of the Study**

The remainder of this study will be presented in the following four chapters. In the second chapter, the theoretical background that guides this study together with a selected review of the relevant literature is presented. In the literature review, I explore the valorization of diversity, focussing on linguistic and cultural diversity. Contrasting emphases upon strengths versus deficits in approaches to the study of child development are also discussed. Finally, the concept of 'readiness' in young children's transition to school and the importance of the contribution of families in children's learning is problematized and reviewed.

An outline of the conceptual framework, the method and research design chosen (i.e. a descriptive embedded case study), the data sources and collection procedures, and the organization and analysis of the data are provided in Chapter 3. Then the ethical considerations, my positionality as a researcher, and issues of trustworthiness including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability are also discussed. In Chapter 4, the findings were framed around their relevance to the three research questions together with the relevant themes and theoretical constructs. An analysis of how sociocultural contexts interact with the themes is interwoven throughout the chapter.

A summary and discussion of the findings as they relate to the study's main theoretical and research foundations are presented in Chapter 5, along with conclusions for the three research questions. The limitations and strengths of the study and implications for further research, implications for school and community policies and practices, and concluding remarks are also included.

## Chapter 2: Background Theory and Research

### 2.1 Overview

This chapter has four main sections. In the first section, I describe aspects of the theories of Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner. In the following section, I introduce perspectives on the valorization of cultural and linguistic diversity (as exemplified by scholars such as Tara Yosso, Jim Cummins, and Luis Moll), as a reinterpretation of Bourdieu's concepts of habitus and capital.

I then focus on how children's development has been viewed from a strengths or a deficits-based perspective. I conclude by highlighting theories of readiness and reviewing research on perspectives on family engagement in children's learning and school transition with culturally and linguistically diverse families.

### 2.2 Theoretical Background

Two main theoretical perspectives frame the study's design and analysis of this research. First, the construct of *habitus* from Bourdieu's social theory informed the objectives and design. Bourdieu's construct of *capital* (both social and cultural) is incorporated in my consideration of this study's topic of strengths and resources (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) or what others have termed *funds-of-knowledge* (e.g. Moll et al., 1992; Vélez-Ibáñez & Greenberg, 1992) or *community cultural wealth* (Yosso, 2005) that children, families, and communities bring to schooling. Together with Bourdieu (1977), scholars such as Heath (1983), Cummins (2001b), Au (1993, 2011), and

Yosso (2005) argue that schools inconsistently draw upon the social and cultural resources of society, inadvertently privileging specific groups by valuing particular linguistic styles, curricula, authority patterns, and standards.

The second theoretical source is Bronfenbrenner's (2000, 2005) bioecological systems framework. This argues for attention to the interactions amongst the developing child's concentric contexts to account for the differential educational and social success of children from different backgrounds (Patrikakou, 2016).

Bronfenbrenner's theoretical model complements Bourdieu's social theory, particularly the concept of field.

### **2.2.1 Habitus, Capital, and Field**

While the work of French social theorist Pierre Bourdieu was developed to address issues of inequalities in a wide range of social activities, his theory of educational contexts was employed here. Specifically, the constructs of *habitus* and *capital* as they pertain to the ways in which children acquire their individual 'system of dispositions towards learning' and how these constructs are impacted by individuals' interactions in the various settings (i.e. *fields*) with their rules or norms are incorporated into this study's conceptual framework (Section 3.2).

Habitus is a set of culturally determined dispositions which aims to transform our ways of seeing the social world. Habitus is therefore structured by class, ethnicity, family biography, history, and geography, each influencing practices and perceptions. It

is initially acquired during socialization within the family, reflecting caregivers' beliefs about child development and shaping parenting practices and family routines (Houston, 2017), later reconstituted in new settings (Bourdieu's *fields*) like school.

Bourdieu explains:

The habitus acquired in the family underlines the structuring of school experiences (in particular the reception and assimilation of the specifically pedagogic message), and the habitus transformed by schooling, itself diversified, in turn underlies the structuring of all subsequent experiences (e.g., the reception and assimilation of the message of the culture industry or work experiences) and so on, from restructuring to restructuring (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 87) .

While family habitus is the basis for school habitus, school habitus is transformed through the inculcation of dominant social and cultural practices of society promoted by the educational institution.

Bourdieu suggests that those students whose family habitus most closely resembles that of the school are deemed "ready" and thus empowered to achieve whereas students who are members of a non-dominant culture or class are viewed as deficient or culturally deprived (Nash, 1990). While many subsequent readings of Bourdieu's theoretical work have interpreted the concept of habitus as a deterministic structure, others have argued that it is a dynamic process that can be transformed in different contexts (Barrett & Martina, 2012; Lizardo, 2004; Reay, 2004).

Another important theoretical construct included in Bourdieu's approach to concepts of power and inequality is *capital*. Capital is the means by which individuals position themselves and effect change. Bourdieu has described four forms of capital



throughout his writings: social, cultural (including linguistic), economic, and symbolic. Economic capital serves as the base for the other forms of capital, shaping the lives of individuals and groups. However, Bourdieu and Passeron (1990) explain that economic capital can be converted into other forms of capital and that the reverse is also true. For example, possessing the economic capital (resources) to access post-secondary education provides increased social and cultural capital through expanded social networks and future occupational success, which in turn, can be converted back to economic capital through one's enhanced lifetime earnings. It is primarily social and cultural capital that are relevant to this study because of their conceptual association with linguistic and cultural diversity. For Bourdieu, the acquisition of capital is accomplished through the habitus. Family habitus is both grounded in and generates different kinds of capital through the allocation, distribution, and use of family resources (Tomanović, 2004).

*Social capital* resources are based on group membership, relationships, and networks of influence and support. Examples of these include family, religious affiliations, and cultural heritage. Bourdieu (1986) describes social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (1986, p. 248). Resources are sources of help or information, support, positive relationships, or other assets, especially ones that can be readily drawn upon

by a person or organization in order to function effectively. Coleman (1987) contends that parental involvement (with children and schools) is a kind of social capital or resource that is critical for children's academic success.

*Cultural capital* consists primarily of cultural knowledge and preferences, and linguistic competence. Families provide their children with cultural capital by transmitting the attitudes, knowledge, and goods needed to succeed in the dominant culture including the educational system. However, Bourdieu argues that schools favour particular linguistic and cultural resources and experiences (cultural capital) over others thus disadvantaging groups from the non-dominant culture (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). Children and families from cultural and linguistic minorities are often marginalized, albeit unintentionally, for cultural and linguistic practices (i.e. habitus) not sanctioned by the school (Blackledge, 2001).

Neither the theoretical constructs of habitus or capital can be understood without considering their relationship to the notion of *field*. Bourdieu describes *field* as the dynamic, ever changing “rules of the game” which help set standards or dominant practices:

A field may be defined as a network, or a configuration, of objective relations between practices...We can, with caution, compare a field to a game...it follows rules, or better, regularities, that are not explicit and codified. (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, pp. 97–98)

Fields are hierarchical and can be social, cultural, educational, religious, artistic, economic, or intellectual, each with its own specific set of principles that direct action and confer power.

Bourdieu theorized that social, cultural and economic capital combine with habitus and field to provide resources for an individual. It is the interaction amongst these principles or rules, an individual's habitus or 'feel for the game', and access to capital that determines where an individual is positioned in the field (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Thomson, 2008). Those individuals who begin with a similar set of dispositions (i.e., habitus) and kinds of capital to the social field in which they are engaging such as the school, community, or workplace, are at an advantage because that field both depends on and values those kinds of capital and dispositions. For Bourdieu, capital provides a way of thinking about unequal power relations and social inclusion or exclusion. Recent studies, however, suggest that the type of family capital generated and transmitted in culturally and racially diverse families is related less to Bourdieu's privileged link between social class and later educational achievement than to other kinds of capital such as ethnic, religious, occupational, and social network-based cultural capital that are valued in different settings or in Bourdieusian terms, 'fields' (Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Trueba, 2002; Tzanakis, 2011; Yosso, 2005). I anticipated interpreting interview responses in the light of constructs derived from Bourdieu's theory. This was particularly important for

CALD children in families to open up a discussion of how they can gain equal opportunity for school success.

### **2.2.2 The Bioecological Model of Human Development**

Over the past several decades, sociocultural approaches to understanding human development have increasingly been articulated across a wide range of disciplines. Several models and mechanisms have been proposed which recognize the dynamic interplay between individuals and social and cultural-historical processes, most notably those of Bronfenbrenner (1994, 2000, 2005), Rogoff (2003), and Vygotsky (1978).

In recent years, ecological theories of human development have received a great deal of attention from those interested in human growth and development. Shifting away from an emphasis on individual biological characteristics as the sole determinant of childhood development outcomes, these theories stress the contributions of the child's environment, family, and culture. While biology and genetics are important, they are only pieces of a very complex puzzle which includes many factors that influence human development. Ecological factors such as home, school, and neighbourhood environments heavily influence children's development and ability to successfully participate in society, which includes school success (Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Lapointe et al., 2007; Patrikakou, 2016).

One of the most notable theorists in human ecology, Urie Bronfenbrenner, claimed that in order to understand child development and learning, we need to look at

the interactions or relationships between children and their immediate (family) and their extended environments. Drawing on the earlier work of Vygotsky and Dewey, Bronfenbrenner also claims that these relationships are dynamic and interdependent: any change in one aspect will affect the others.

Dewey (1938) argues that culture is a mechanism of development and that any determination of “good” development is dictated by culturally valued goals and social practices. He believed that children learned through inquiry and self-discovery in a “continuous spiral” (p. 97) of child-centred, experience-based situations and interactions with their communities. (1938). Vygotsky, too, was interested in how children learn and how learning contributes to development. Vygotsky’s socio-historical theory (also referred to as sociocultural theory) proposes that children’s development is mediated through social interaction with informed cultural guides (Rogoff, 2003; Vygotsky, 1978). For Vygotsky, it is the cultural guide’s (i.e. adults or more advanced peers) role to mentor children through the “zone of proximal development” in the use of culturally appropriate tools, most notably, language (Rogoff & Wertsch, 1984). Vygotsky believed that development arose from social activities rather than individual action on the world, and rather than seeking universal developmental characteristics, his sociocultural theory emphasized the significance of children’s specific social and cultural environments for development.

Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, revised and renamed as "bioecological systems theory" (2005), contextualizes the various influences on child development and learning by means of the following taxonomy:

1. The *microsystem* represents the social relations between the child and the environmental setting closest to the child. This includes direct influences in the child's daily life such as family, school, neighbourhood, or childcare environments.
2. The *mesosystem* provides the connections and interactions between major settings of the child's microsystem, such as the connections between family experiences and school experiences or childcare experiences and community experiences that foster children's development. For instance, parental engagement with the school or community-based activities in which the child participates is likely to support development when there are reciprocal connections between the settings.
3. The *exosystem* defines the larger social system in which the child does not function directly but which still exerts an influence by interacting with some structure in the child's microsystem such as parental workplace, extended family, or community-based services. Even though children might not be directly involved, they are nonetheless affected. For example, if a parent loses employment and is unable to buy groceries, the child is affected.
4. The *macrosystem* is the cultural context in which the child lives. It is comprised of sociocultural beliefs, values, customs, and laws of the community of which the

individual is a part. The priority given to the needs of children and adults at this level is filtered continuously through the other systems. For example, community support for childcare and workplace benefits for parents will affect children's experiences and thus their microsystem is likewise affected.

Each of these systems is nested within the next and all relationships are bidirectional. For instance, the connections established between children and their families and children and their teachers represent two microsystems which affect the interactions and communication between their parents and their teachers, a relationship that belongs to the mesosystem. This relationship in turn, can influence children's interactions with their parents or their teachers. Bronfenbrenner posits that children develop through the continuous interactions and influences among the different environmental systems. Thus, changes in one system invariably create changes in other systems. Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) later added a temporal dimension to his model, the *chronosystem*, which accounts for changes over time.

Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory has generated a renewed interest in environmental settings as they relate to development and behaviour and provides a foundation for many of the research studies that examine the relationship between home, school, and community effects and child development (e.g. Brooks-Gunn et al., 1993; Earls & Buka, 2000; Epstein & Sheldon, 2006; Furstenberg, Jr. & Hughes, 1997). Ecological theory has been responsible for broadening an earlier narrow focus on

individual biological determinants to include the environmental milieu that surrounds the child (Lapointe et al., 2007). By viewing the multiple contexts that influence children and their families and the interactions between those contexts, researchers can provide a more detailed picture of child development and thereby establish a fuller knowledge base for enhancing children's educational outcomes. Moreover, such a theoretical perspective is well suited to studies of determinants of success for early learning, given the multiple factors involved (Hayes et al., 2017).

In this study, attending to the social contextual processes that shape the experiences of children and families and the dynamic interactions amongst them allowed me to examine the impact of these factors on beliefs and expectations for culturally and linguistically diverse children's successful learning and development. In particular, I attended to the specific microsystems of home, school, and community and the interrelationships amongst them at the level of the mesosystem.

### **2.2.3 Connections between Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner**

While there is no direct correlation between the theories of Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner, it is possible to draw limited but relevant connections between the key concepts of both theories (Houston, 2017) for the purposes of this study. In particular, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory focuses on the dynamic interrelationships both between individuals and between the various systems (the micro, meso, exo, and macro systems). In a similar vein, Bourdieu postulates that the interplay between



agency and structure is reflected in the interconnections between the concepts of habitus, capital, and field. As Lizardo (2004) points out, Bourdieu views habitus as a “generative dynamic structure that adapts and accommodates itself to another dynamic meso level structure composed primarily of other actors, situated practices and durable institutions (fields)” (p.376). Both theorists studied multiple levels of interactions between individuals and systems and saw the individual shaped by social contexts.

An important difference between the two theoretical perspectives is reflected in the role of human agency. While both theorists saw human development shaped by social context and socialization, Bronfenbrenner’s focus is more on the individual’s intrinsic traits in interaction with the environment whereas Bourdieu was more concerned with the reproduction of power and domination through habitus (Houston, 2017).

Bronfenbrenner’s focus on the interactions between the systems, specifically the micro- and macrosystems, allowed me to examine participants’ beliefs about the influence of the social contexts in which children develop and learn whereas Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus, capital, and field helped shed light on how power and structure shape those interrelationships. Further, various scholarly reinterpretations of Bourdieu’s concepts of habitus and capital helped me look for assumptions that may lead to systemic or structural inequalities for CALD children and families, including themes of identity, power, and access.

### **2.3 The Valorization of Diversity**

Although cultural and linguistic diversity is widely claimed to be valued and celebrated in school and community contexts, it is often overlooked, acknowledged only superficially or worse, stigmatized, primarily because it is poorly understood and discussed in educational discourse. Speaking a language other than English can be viewed as an educational challenge rather than as a resource or opportunity to be used to extend all students' learning. Cultural practices outside the norm of mainstream culture may be discouraged rather than capitalized upon for broadening perspectives on tolerance and discrimination (Ladson-Billings, 1999). Further, children and families who speak a first language other than English and/or who identify with a minority ethnicity are not a homogeneous group. Broader categories of diversity including socioeconomic status, background experiences, sociocultural practices, levels of education, in addition to linguistic dialects will vary greatly even amongst seemingly similar groups (e.g. from the same broad cultural background). In order to meet the needs of diversity in general in schools and society, contemporary scholars (e.g. Nieto, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2012; Sleeter, 2001; Solorzano & Yosso, 2001; Yosso, 2005) suggest that the institutional policies and practices that maintain entrenched power relations, controlling the opportunities for success among diverse populations of students must be replaced by an approach that affirms the pluralism (ethnic, racial, linguistic,

religious, economic and gender, among others) that students, families, and communities reflect.

### **2.3.1 Perspectives on Cultural and Linguistic Diversity**

Bourdieu posits a disparity between the cultural resources and knowledge of middle-class families that are valued and rewarded by schools and society on the one hand, and the cultural capital of less privileged families whose children have not acquired the expected cultural knowledge and skills before entering school. Traditional analyses of cultural capital have sometimes interpreted this disparity as an indication of cultural poverty (DiMaggio, 1982; Dumais, 2006; Sullivan, 2001). This is despite Bourdieu's claim that the value placed on privileged forms of social and cultural capital are a result of the reproduction of hierarchical power relations. Children and families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds whose habitus differs significantly from that of the school (more specifically, school personnel as agents of the educational system) may experience inequality when their linguistic and cultural knowledge and skills, i.e. their cultural capital, are not considered legitimate.

Yosso argues that this is a misinterpretation of Bourdieu's theory which is actually a critique of society which replicates and rewards white, middle-class culture. As a challenge to this deficit view that culturally diverse children and families are disadvantaged, Yosso (2005) developed an alternative concept, community cultural wealth (CCW), grounded in critical race theory to illustrate how non-dominant forms of

capital that exist in marginalized communities offer a counter-narrative to deficiency models by reframing culture as resource (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016).

Yosso (2005) identifies six forms of capital that emerge from the cultural assets and resources of community cultural wealth that provide a rich framework for examining the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. Yosso claims that cultural wealth manifests within communities in multiple ways, such as “aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital” and that traits of cultural wealth “are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77). Each one helps validate cultural strengths in communities and aims to help social and educational institutions reframe their approaches in encouraging student success.

The first, *aspirational capital* refers to the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, despite real and perceived social, economic, and institutional barriers. *Linguistic capital* includes “the intellectual and social skills attained through communication in multiple languages and/or language styles” (p.78). *Familial capital* “refers to those cultural knowledges nurtured among familia (kin) that carry a sense of community history, memory, and cultural intuition” (p.79). *Social capital* consists of networks of people and community resources that provide instrumental and emotional support. *Navigational capital* refers to skills needed to understand and move through social situations and institutions potentially hostile or unsupportive (p.80). *Resistant*

*capital* refers to “those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality” (p.80). While some of these strengths and resources are inherent within family and community contexts (linguistic, familial, aspirational, social capital), others such as navigational and resistant capital, are cultivated in response to systematic disparities. Yosso’s notion of community cultural wealth (capital) recognizes that different ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic groups bring skills, assets, materials, and cultural knowledge to the classroom other than those typically valued in the norms set by White middle class communities and institutions. This study’s findings imply (Section 5.7) that what is needed is recognition of community cultural wealth as valid alternative sources of capital that children and families can access and build on.

CALD children and their families have home languages and cultural backgrounds that differ from the dominant language(s) and mainstream culture typically promoted in schools. Cultural and linguistic diversity is rarely viewed impartially by families, schools, or communities. For example, Cummins and Early (2011) argue that to the extent the interactions between them “either reinforce coercive relations of power or promote collaborative relations of power...they contribute to the disempowerment of culturally diverse students and communities” (p.26). Cummins (2001c; 2005) claims further that students’ success or failure is determined by the negotiation of identity in the interactions between educators and students and their families. For example, “school policy [that] dictates that children leave their language

and culture at the schoolhouse door” belies the claim of “teaching the whole child” (Cummins, 2001a, p. 38), communicating a negative message, albeit unintentionally, about children’s and families’ identities. In contrast, children and families whose experiences with school reflect collaborative relations of power have their cultural and linguistic identities affirmed, consequently contributing to school success for children and educators alike (Cummins, 2009).

While many scholars discuss the formation of identity as construction, others argue that the idea of *negotiation* better captures the nuance of the development of identity as a more fluid evolving process (Compton-Lilly et al., 2017; Ting-Toomey, 2015). Trueba (2002) describes identity negotiation as “the dynamic and continuous interaction between special agents in the fields”(p.19) of home, school, and community that affect a child’s early socialization and self-identity (or *habitus*) formation. Trueba further argues that in today’s society, along with the mastery of different languages and the ability to cross racial and ethnic boundaries, multiple identities should be considered an asset – a new kind of cultural capital (p. 24).

The concept of *funds of knowledge*, first used by Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) was applied by Luis Moll and his colleagues (González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992; Moll & Greenberg, 1990) to highlight the knowledge and resources of working class Hispanic students and their families in Arizona as an alternative to the deficit perspectives that were being applied to them and to other lower socioeconomic level

families. Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg (1992) argue that “these funds of knowledge are not only key to understanding the cultural systems in which U.S.-Mexican children emerge, but are also important and useful assets in the classroom” (p. 313). Using an ethnographic approach, Moll and colleagues interviewed families in their homes and documented family histories including employment, household practices, childrearing views, and values about education. They referred to these “historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being” (1992, p. 133) as funds of knowledge and noted how these funds were bartered amongst families through social networks, becoming part of the families’ resources, i.e., Bourdieu’s social and economic capital. Esteban-Guitart and Moll’s current work (2014) translates funds of knowledge into funds of identity. They explain “Funds of knowledge are repositories of identity to which people have access. Consequently, the funds of knowledge are funds of identity when people use them to define themselves” (p. 37). These concepts are widely used in North American and European contexts in order to study how schools that are informed by culturally relevant knowledge such as uses of language, cultural beliefs, values, and practices in homes and communities can offer linguistic and cultural minority students equitable opportunities to learn (e.g. Andrews & Yee, 2006; Moje, 2008; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011).

In the present study a theoretical stance in which children's and families' culturally rooted knowledge and competence is regarded as a source of strength together with the resources or cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) of the community is applied. Consequently, there is an attempt in this study to describe the extent to which that knowledge is recognized by participant stakeholders as an educational asset or resource, rather than as a liability or deficit that places children at risk for educational failure. Community cultural wealth, funds of knowledge or identity, and collaborative power relations can be viewed as contemporary reconceptualizations of social and cultural capital. Theorists such as Yosso, Moll, and Cummins articulate guidelines for engaging communities in the contemporary educational environment. Their theories promote pedagogical and curricular inclusion of multiple cultural contexts to acknowledge the wealth and range of knowledge created within and fostered by culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

#### **2.4 Contrasting Approaches to Child Development and Education**

Theoretical assumptions about child development inform and shape early childhood research, as well as educational policy and practice. Depending on those assumptions, approaches to research, policy, and practice can be viewed from either deficits-based or strengths-based perspectives. This contrast resembles the ways in which the perspectives discussed in Section 2.3.1 challenge the deficit model of cultural and linguistic diversity. This contrast in perspectives also helped to motivate my



curiosity as to whether it might be reflected in the range of beliefs and expectations articulated by participants in the present study.

#### **2.4.1 Deficit Perspectives on Child Development**

Feminist researcher Valerie Polakow (1992, 1993) suggests that talking about “children at-risk” implies a certain discourse of deficiency and a social construct of poverty as individual pathology rather than implying a view of difference that is socially constructed in political and economic contexts that in turn frame and influence lives. Especially vulnerable in these systems are those with relatively little power who live in poverty and/or come from culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds. From her interviews with poor, single mothers and their families, Polakow concludes that developmental theory and practice itself blames children—and by extension, their mothers—for being poor. “Poor children enter [early education] not as little persons, but as at-risk cases” (1992, p. 141). Christine Sleeter (1995) argues that “the dominant discourse attempts to frame such children and their families as lacking the cultural and moral resources for success ... and as in need of compensatory help from the dominant society” (p. ix).

Some of those who work with disadvantaged populations segment these systems into the study of particular variables, making assumptions that cultural differences are equivalent to cultural deprivation (cf. Section 2.3.1), which can primarily be attributable to inadequate child rearing practices, while ignoring other socioeconomic and political

forces. Such studies have consistently found that children who are both socioeconomically disadvantaged and ethnoculturally segregated (i.e., poor minorities) are more likely to fare worse on a range of developmental outcomes (e.g., health, school achievement) than children from high socioeconomic, and cultural mainstream backgrounds (e.g. Berliner, 2006; Entwisle et al., 1997; Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). In contrast, however, recent studies that examined interactions among sociocultural factors such as gender, cultural group, immigrant and socioeconomic status found that immigrants and different cultural groups may foster developmental competences particularly appropriate to contexts and circumstances in which they live (Bygren & Szulkin, 2010; De Feyter & Winsler, 2009; Grönqvist, 2006; Milbrath & Guhn, 2019). In an examination of immigrants in Sweden, Grönqvist (2006) found that growing up in ethnic enclaves did not affect educational outcomes or unemployment for second-generation immigrants nor annual income for both first and second- generation immigrants. In another large-scale study, using a data set of over 6,000 immigrant students in Sweden together with information on their families and neighbourhoods, Bygren and Szulkin (2010) also discovered that immigrant children benefited from living in co-ethnic neighbourhoods with a high level of resources in terms of educational attainment.

The Human Early Learning Partnership (HELP) at the University of British Columbia collects province-wide data via teacher ratings of children's early child

development that are good predictors of adult health, education, and social outcomes using the Early Development Instrument (EDI). Earlier findings from their work with the EDI have consistently found that children with English as a Second Language status (ESL) received lower ratings on all five developmental domains of the EDI (Guhn et al., 2007; Kershaw et al., 2005; Lloyd et al., 2009). HELP went so far as referring to neighbourhoods as vulnerable based solely on EDI information on either the language or communication domains. By comparison, their more recent studies (Guhn et al., 2010, 2016) found that at a lower socioeconomic level, Punjabi- and Cantonese-speaking children received ratings similar to or higher than the English –speaking children in all domains except for the communication domain. Further, the Cantonese-speaking children did better in the developmental areas that more closely resembled early school competences whereas the Punjabi-speaking children excelled on social competences, which the authors hypothesize may be a result of particular cultural support and expectations. They concluded that children’s home language backgrounds (used as a proxy for heritage culture) and bilingual status reflected different developmental strengths. These findings, they suggest, have important implications for those who work with CALD children and families.

In another study, De Feyter and Winsler (2009) examined school readiness using a variety of early childhood assessment measures of over 2,000 young immigrant children in Miami, Florida. They found that, in addition to the heterogeneity of school

readiness outcomes in diverse groups of young immigrant children, there was evidence of an immigrant advantage for first-generation immigrant children compared to second-generation and non-immigrant children. Hence, there is increasing evidence that cultural diversity in certain social contexts can prove to be advantageous for young children entering school rather than posing a deficit or disadvantage.

A deficit perspective has significant implications for educators' expectations for low-income and/or culturally and linguistically diverse children and families. E. E. García and Guerra (2004) argue that many "school reform efforts stall or fail because deficit beliefs become a filter that blocks educators' abilities to examine their assumptions and to look beyond traditional solutions for real and meaningful change" (p. 151). Howard and Roderiques-Scheel (2017) also note that cultural deficit paradigms are re-emerging in some U.S. schools' policies and practices, mischaracterizing students' differences as deficits. Similar phenomena have also been found in Canadian early childhood settings (Heydon & Iannacci, 2008). Implications of this research are reflected in the findings as well as policy and practice implications of the present study.

#### **2.4.2 Strengths Perspectives on Child Development**

Assumptions about the universality of development and its implications for educational practice have been criticized for their failure to capture the socioculturally diverse nature of many families and communities (Lubeck, 1998). In addition, psychological models derived from a traditional disease-oriented view have focussed

primarily on deficits, categorizing differences between children in terms of disability or pathology rather than on strength and resilience (Bryan, 2005; Seligman et al., 2005).

In contrast, proponents of strengths perspectives (sometimes termed strengths-based approaches) advocate a change from a preoccupation with solely repairing the worst things in life to goals of building the best qualities in life (Seligman, 2002; Seligman et al., 2009). This emphasis on promoting assets is described as the positive relationships, opportunities, competencies, values, and self-perceptions that children and their families need to succeed (DeFrain & Asay, 2014; Dunst et al., 2000; Green et al., 2005; Rogoff et al., 2017). A strengths perspective on child development focuses, not surprisingly, on the *strengths* of children, families, and communities, including abilities, talents, interests, capabilities, preferences, aspirations, skills, competencies, values, and self-perceptions. By recognizing children's strengths and competencies, educational professionals, for example, can be made aware of the personal and ecological resources (including family and community resources) available to the child to meet developmental goals. Findings from Dunst et al.'s (2000) survey research with over 2,000 parents and caregivers suggested that it was the participatory, "naturally occurring learning opportunities" (p. 151) that allowed individuals and groups to strengthen existing capabilities and build new ones, which in turn, opened up opportunities for new experiences and the development of additional strengths.

It is worth noting that the scholarship of Moll, Yosso, and Cummins (discussed in Section 2.3.1) hold strengths perspectives regarding culturally and linguistically diverse families and communities. They consider cultural and linguistic diversity as assets or sources of capital for educational success. The concept of strengths is a theoretical thread running through the scholarship of Bourdieu, Yosso, Moll, Cummins, and their intellectual followers.

## **2.5 Young Children's Transition to School: Two Issues**

### **2.5.1 Who is Ready for What?**

Young children's transition to their first year of schooling is one of the most significant events in their lives. Consequently, it is important to understand what families and schools believe is important in preparing young children to start school, including developmental milestones, ways to facilitate and support transition to kindergarten, and the roles that families, schools, and communities can play. Children enter school with an assortment of skills and abilities most of which are expected as part of their maturation but also as part of a range of dispositions and experiences. Previously, in both research and practice, there has been an emphasis on children exhibiting certain skills and attributes in order to be "ready" for kindergarten. By contrast, others note the importance of schools being ready for children (Bhattacharjea, 2019; Brooker, 2008; Dockett, 2014; Dockett & Perry, 2009). Not only do the child and family need to be 'ready' in order to promote positive experiences of transition, but the

school needs to be 'ready' as well. Researchers also refer to 'community readiness' which can ease the transition between home and school by providing continuity between early childhood environments and school (Biddulph et al., 2003; Dockett & Perry, 2017; Rogoff, 2003). The debate on who is responsible for ensuring children's successful transition to school bears directly upon the second research question concerning beliefs about roles and responsibilities for supporting young CALD children's transition to school. It also bears upon the third research question, which probes beliefs about those actions that might facilitate young CALD children's transition to school.

The construct of *readiness* is contested and has been differentially defined and interpreted in the literature depending upon the underlying theoretical perspective on child growth and development taken by the researcher, practitioners or policymakers (Cannella & Bloch, 2006; Graue, 2006; Graue & Reineke, 2014). In an effort to clarify these differences, Kagan (1990) distinguished between readiness for learning and readiness for school. Readiness to learn is viewed as the level of development needed to learn specific material. Readiness for school refers to the successful participation in a typical school context with an emphasis on academic skills.

Traditional approaches such as the maturationist view as delineated by Meisels (1999) have focussed upon universal and invariantly constructed progressive stages of development implying developmental norms for school readiness. Privileging Western

upper and middle class families and their children, this view of development ignores cultural variation in readiness meanings and practices thus creating an imbalance of power (Cannella & Viruru, 2004). Sociocultural and constructivist approaches, (e.g. Dewey, 1938; Vygotsky, 1978) on the other hand, view readiness as socially and culturally constructed by the participants, including schools, families, and communities (Graue, 1993). Consequently, a child can be ready in one social context and not in another. Rather than depending solely on developmental knowledge, these theorists argue that a more diverse knowledge base which examines the role of history, politics, philosophies of research, and context on beliefs about childhood is required, together with critical interdisciplinary inquiry (Cannella & Viruru, 2004; Delpit, 2006; Lee & Walsh, 2001). Incorporating ideas from cultural-historical theory, poststructuralism, and postmodernism, this perspective provides a basis for examining the many ways in which children's early learning and growth can be interpreted beyond a traditional monolingual, monocultural one which may limit our expectations for their achievements (Edwards et al., 2009).

Much of the research investigating readiness from this perspective employs qualitative methods in order to capture the multiple realities that exist within particular groups and settings. Graue (1993), in her study of readiness practices and beliefs of families and teachers in three different communities that varied along socioeconomic and geographic lines, concluded "the meanings of readiness were locally developed



and used” (p. 248) determined by “ideas held by the family, school, or community about how children grow and the factors that enhance or inhibit the development of readiness” (p. 249). Smith and Shepard (1988), in their qualitative study of teacher beliefs and practices of kindergarten readiness and retention, also found that the range of teacher beliefs about readiness was a function of locally shared views of school readiness which arose from the particular values and expectations of the school together with teachers’ own experiences and background. Using focus groups in diverse community settings to examine kindergarten parents’ and school professionals’ conceptions of school readiness, Wesley and Buysse (2003) identified differences in which aspects of readiness were seen as important. The findings from these studies indicate that the construct of readiness can substantially differ from one (e.g. geographic, cultural) community to the next (Graue, 1993, 2006; Hill & Craft, 2003), as well as whose views are valued (e.g. parents, professionals). Meisels (1999) suggests that an interactionist approach is needed in both policy and practice that takes into account maturation, environment, and social construction in communities.

In sum, as Graue (2006) points out, readiness is a complex, multidimensional, and process oriented concept, that mutually constitutes “the social context of child development, the material resources available to support or constrain growth, the beliefs and practices that structure opportunity and the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive state brought to school” (p.51). Similarly, early childhood theorists such as

Bloch (1992) and Cannella (2005) reconceptualise readiness as socially, culturally, and politically constructed, varying over time and in differing contexts. The Educational Transitions and Change (ETC) Research Group (2011) advise that the construct of readiness needs to be expanded to include educational transitions. They view readiness as an interplay between children, family, community and educational elements, demonstrated in different ways in different contexts and that different elements of readiness contribute to experiences of transition.

One approach that entails both the child's readiness for school and the school's readiness for children is Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta's (2000) ecological model for school transition. Using Bronfenbrenner's theory, their proposal places the child into a network of relationships because "transition to school takes place in an environment defined by the many changing interactions among child, school, classroom, family, and community factors." (p. 499). They explained that conceptualizing the home-school transition process involves families, schools, teachers, and the wider community working together to support children before, during, and after their time at school.

In this study, transition was defined as children moving into and adjusting to new learning environments, families learning to work with a sociocultural system (education), and schools making provisions for admitting new children into the system, representing individual and societal diversity (Vogler et al., 2008). It will be seen from

the discussion of findings in the present study that transition to school is seen by a range of stakeholders as interaction amongst home, school, and community.

According to a UNICEF report, the term “school readiness” has been theorized and discussed not only as children’s readiness for school and schools’ readiness for children but also in terms of “the readiness of families and communities to help children make the transition to school” (2012, p. 2). The role of families is of particular interest to this study because it bears on Cummins’ notion of collaborative power relations as a necessary component of children’s educational success.

### **2.5.2 The Contribution of Families**

The transition to school has been identified as having the potential to provide opportunities for adult family members to establish relationships of collaboration with educators to support the learning and well-being of the children. Viewing transition as a set of processes and relationships, as individuals move from one context to another (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) or change their roles in educational communities (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) has led to a growing understanding of the opportunities and challenges involved (Dockett & Perry, 2001; Fabian & Dunlop, 2007).

The significant role that families, particularly parents, play in children’s development is accepted in both research and practice. Which practices best serve children, and in which contexts, is more widely contested. There has been extensive research showing the benefits of families supporting children’s learning and

development in preparing them for school (Cairney, 2000; Clifford & Humphries, 2018; Coleman, 1987; Delpit, 2006; Pianta, 2002; Zigler & Styfco, 2004). As noted, traditional conceptions of school preparedness propose that families are primarily responsible for getting their children ready for school by ensuring they have achieved the milestones that meet the developmental norms expected by the school. Children from families whose beliefs and practices for supporting learning and development align with the expectations from the school have an educational advantage (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Cummins, 1997; Heath, 1983; Lareau, 2011). Those families who hold a different set of values and beliefs, however, are often hindered in helping their children to become successful at school (Brooker, 2002; Crozier & Davies, 2007; Milne, 2016). Without a common reference point between home and school beliefs concerning expectations for school and how best to support them, children may receive mixed messages and therefore, not develop their full learning potential.

As with earlier binary notions of school readiness the term *parent involvement* has been recently reconceptualised. Parent involvement has traditionally been associated with school-centric approaches (Lawson, 2003) that focus on promoting parent education and increasing their involvement through a deficit lens (Epstein, 2018; Ishimaru et al., 2016; Lareau & Horvat, 1999). A more recent conception, termed *family engagement*, on the other hand, relates to parents and other family members engaging with children's learning, starting at birth and may not necessarily equate to

involvement with school (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Pushor and Amendt (2018) among others, argue that parent involvement's hierarchical, school-centric nature maintains educators' power and authority over parents whereas parent engagement is family-centric, acknowledging that families, too, are holders of critical knowledge of children, teaching, and learning. Pushor and Ruitenberg (2005) argue further that "engagement implies enabling parents to take their place alongside educators in the schooling of their children, fitting together their knowledge of children, of teaching and learning, with teachers' knowledge" (p.13). The concepts of families' funds of knowledge (cf. Moll and colleagues) and the kinds of capital contained in Yosso's community cultural wealth model are just the kinds of resources that schools could therefore be tapping to promote successful transitions. It appears, however that those resources can only be activated under conditions of collaborative partnerships (cf. Cummins, 2009) and a recognition that non-mainstream families possess valid sources of capital, particularly aspirational, social, linguistic, and familial capital, that can be leveraged to support families' school engagement ((Alameda-Lawson et al., 2013; Yosso, 2005).

School-defined parent involvement practices such as communicating with teachers, participating at school in various capacities (e.g. fundraising; volunteering; attending school events) or actively promoting academic learning with children at home have traditionally been entailed in considerations of best practices. For many families,

however, involvement means caring for their children and making sure their physical and socio-emotional needs are met (e.g. Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Academic preparation is seen to be the school's responsibility. Other practices implemented at home such as having children assume adult roles in household responsibilities may be ignored or undervalued by the school even though families are fully engaged in their children's learning (J. Anderson & Morrison, 2011; Brooker, 2003; González et al., 2005).

Despite an increasing focus by boards and ministries of education in promoting 'parents as partners' ( e.g. the Province of British Columbia's local and district Parent Advisory Councils; the Province of Ontario's Parent Engagement Policy), the engagement of families from cultural and linguistic minorities with the school is often limited. This disengagement is often attributed to a discontinuity or incongruence between home and school beliefs and practices about children's development and the roles and responsibilities for preparing them for school (Clifford & Humphries, 2018; Hill & Craft, 2003; Lareau, 2000; Lareau & Horvat, 1999; Pianta & Walsh, 1996).

In addition, some educationally sanctioned practices for supporting children's development as they transition to school such as an emphasis on child-centred practices and play-based discovery learning fail to take into account the sociocultural diversity in children's home environments. Brooker (2002) for example, provided an ethnographic account of young Bangladeshi children's first-year experiences in a reception class for four-year-olds in a poor urban neighbourhood as they tried to negotiate the

relationships between their home culture and that of their school. Brooker offered some insights on how well-intentioned professionals in aspiring to implement developmentally appropriate practices, instead produced a kind of institutionalized racism. Children whose cultural backgrounds had not prepared them for Western expectations about classroom involvement and social interaction were inadvertently isolated and marginalized by teachers. This implies that the school should be prepared to take into account children's prior experiences and the cultural diversity of their families.

Educational policy and practice that use the social and cultural capital (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Moll et al., 1992; Yosso, 2005) that culturally and linguistically diverse families possess rather than prioritizing the capital of the dominant culture provides more opportunities for children to be successful. Researchers in a collection that included implications for educational practice in diverse populations edited by Genishi and Goodwin (2008) demonstrated how culturally responsive, developmentally appropriate educational practices that recognize and build upon the strengths of children and their families could reduce the impacts of inequitable treatment on the basis of culture, language, gender, or ability. Doucet and Tudge (2007) argue further that an understanding of how culture informs and shapes development is necessary in order to recognize the strengths that children bring from culturally diverse backgrounds. A further implication for practice would be that a reframing of parent and

teacher roles in facilitating children's school transition needs to be made to create more effective and empowering partnerships between families and schools.

As with the preceding section's discussion of the contested notion of school readiness (Section 2.5.1), the related topic of the contribution of families to their children's transition to schooling was of equal interest in motivating the present study's second and third research questions that are designed to explore participants' beliefs not only about roles and responsibilities, but also practices that promote the successful transition of young CALD children to school. Hence these two debates will form a part of the study's conceptual framework as set out in Section 3.2.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, the study's theoretical backgrounds together with a selected review of the relevant research is outlined. Studies of the valorization of diversity are explored with particular focus upon studies involving linguistic and cultural diversity. Contrasting emphases upon strengths versus deficits in studies of child development are also discussed. Contested concepts of 'readiness' in young children's transition to school and the contribution of families to children's learning are problematized and reviewed. Throughout the chapter, theory and research are linked to one another and the study's aims. The study's methodology, conceptual framework, research paradigm, case study research design, participants, and all aspects of data collection and analysis will be presented in the following chapter.



## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **3.1 Overview**

In the first section of this chapter, I outline the conceptual framework and research paradigm selected to support this particular study. Subsequent sections are devoted to a description of the research design and procedures applied in the collection of data and their analysis. Finally, I outline ethical considerations and how trustworthiness is addressed in this study.

### **3.2 Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework includes professional and personal motivations, epistemology, and brief enumeration of the theoretical and research foundations (Maxwell, 2013) that were reviewed in Chapter 2.

#### **3.2.1 Professional and Personal Motivations.**

My professional interest in pursuing this study stems from my experiences teaching young children from diverse culturally and linguistic backgrounds who also had specific linguistic and physical challenges. That work also entailed helping their families navigate the educational and health systems as well as community agencies not only to seek support but also to advocate for their children: I was continually impressed with their determination to provide the best possible experiences they could for their children. That aligned with my professional values of promoting young children's and families' success in public education.

I also experienced personally the situation of living overseas with my two young children where my first language was not spoken and the culture, while sharing many similarities, still posed barriers because of significant differences. Trying to negotiate multiple institutional bureaucracies on my children's behalf, despite being able to communicate in the mainstream language, was a bewildering and humbling experience. Because I had the privilege of being a foreign visiting professional, the stakes were not as high as they were for some families that I observed where the power imbalances were oppressive. This experience caused me to reflect on the children and families who I had worked with earlier, and helped me to appreciate anew the strengths that they possessed and put to good use in service of their children. Both my professional and personal experiences have motivated me to explore how to better serve children and families whose backgrounds and experiences have traditionally not been acknowledged as valuable resources in their children's development and early school success. The present study's topic represents a first, exploratory step in that direction by examining the beliefs that underpin actions that support or hinder young children's educational success.

### **3.2.2 Epistemological view.**

This research was conducted from an interpretivist/constructionist epistemological perspective that reality is socially constructed by individuals, who

make meaning of their experiences. Constructionism, a variant of constructivism

(Schwandt, 2007), is described by Charmaz (2006, p. 189) as follows:

a theoretical perspective that assumes that people create social reality(ies) through individual and collective actions. Rather than seeing the world as given, constructionists ask, how is it accomplished? Thus, instead of assuming realities in an external world – including global structures and local cultures – social constructionists study what people at a particular time and place take as real, how they construct their views and actions, when different constructions arise, whose constructions become taken as definitive, and how that process ensues.

Further, the interpretivist approach is highly applicable to qualitative research because it provides for the co-construction of telling of participants' experiences and how they interpret or make meaning of these experiences guided by the researcher's theoretical framework and own personal subjectivities (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Miles & Huberman, 1994).

In this study, taking the view that knowledge and reality are constructed through discourse with others, I describe participants' beliefs and expectations, rather than their behaviour, to reveal their understandings of CALD children, their strengths and their families' and cultures' resources, and ways that they can support children as they transition to school. These descriptions are also shaped by the perspectives that I bring to the research in terms of how I constructed and conducted the study and analyzed the findings.

### 3.2.3 Theoretical and Research Foundations.

I draw upon two scholarly traditions as well as relevant scholarship from critical analytic perspectives on diversity to frame not only the scope of this study, but also its design. In particular, research on the valorization of cultural and linguistic diversity allowed me to contrast two approaches to child development that are often characterized as strengths-based and deficits-based perspectives.

First, this study adopts Bourdieu's concepts of *habitus* and *social and cultural capital* and the related notions of *funds of knowledge* and *community cultural wealth* to ground the *scope* of this study and its key concepts *strengths and resources*. I then use those key concepts to show how another of the study's topics, diversity, can be valorized either from a deficit- or a strengths-based orientation or perspective, indicating that this study will valorize diversity (linguistic and cultural) from a strengths orientation or perspective. In addition, I discuss how a concept that emerged from my own interviews, *identity negotiation*, is theoretically grounded in recent scholarship by Cummins, Trueba, and others.

The second scholarly tradition I called upon was Bronfenbrenner's bioecological systems theory. I used it to ground my decision to locate the inquiry within children's and families' interdependent ecological systems or contexts surrounding children's successful transition to school. It also shaped the study's sampling design.

In addition to the scholarly traditions of Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner and followers, I explored two additional, contested notions that are widely discussed in association with children's transition to school and early learning, the concepts of children's readiness for school, and family contribution to children's learning, particularly in regard to culturally and linguistically diverse families.

### **3.3 Qualitative Research Paradigm**

In order to respond appropriately to the linguistic, cultural, and context-specific strengths, resources, and needs of children and families, schools and communities should be cognizant of culturally differently constructed meanings of learning and development for their particular contexts (Cummins, 1997; Fraise & Brooks, 2015; Koh et al., 2015; Li, 2009; Souto-Manning et al., 2018). I chose a qualitative research paradigm to explore how the varied realities and experiences of each of the participants shaped their beliefs and expectations for supporting the young children in their care.

Qualitative research can discover meanings that people attribute to their experience (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This characteristic of qualitative research appears well aligned to the goals of the present study, which require exploration of beliefs and expectations of participants about CALD children and families. Further, qualitative inquiry allows the researcher to capture and understand diverse perspectives, observing and analyzing behaviours in context (Patton, 2014). Patton defined context as what is "going on around the people,

groups, organizations, or systems of interest” (p. 9). The present study was designed to capture those diverse perspectives, as described in the following section(s), in contexts chosen for their relevance to the selected case under investigation.

### **3.4 Case Study Research Design**

Despite a lack of agreement of how case study methodology should be approached, the case study is one of the most widely implemented designs in educational research (Yazan, 2015). Creswell (2007) describes case study as a methodology, a type of design in qualitative research, an object of study and a product of the inquiry" (p.245). Creswell recommends using case study if the problem to be studied "relates to developing an in-depth understanding of a 'case' or bounded system" (p. 496) and if the purpose is to understand "an event, activity, process, or one or more individuals" (p. 496).

Case studies are used to investigate “a contemporary phenomenon (e.g., a “case”), set within its real-world context—especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, p. 18) and with a view to understand the issue from the perspective of participants (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2005; Yin, 2014).The researcher will seek to explore, understand, and present the participants' perspectives (Creswell, 2013).

As noted in Section 1.3, the primary purpose of this study was to describe and discuss in detail and in depth, the beliefs of stakeholders, “looking for patterns and

connections in relation to theoretical constructs”(Mills et al., 2010, p. 1). A descriptive case study, the approach employed in this study, “is one that is focused and detailed, in which propositions and questions about a phenomenon are carefully scrutinized and articulated at the outset”. Mills et al. further state “the power and promise of a descriptive case study lie in its potential for mining for abstract interpretations of data and theory development” (Mills et al., 2010, p. 2).

### **3.4.1 Embedded case study**

Embedded case studies are studies in which different levels or sources of data are collected (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2014). More specifically, an embedded case study approach, according to Yin, allows the researcher to attend to more than one unit of analysis in order to focus on different aspects of the case. The principal factor determining the choice of an embedded design for this study was the ability it offered me to explore and describe beliefs about the strengths and resources of CALD children and families including expectations about roles and responsibilities for helping them transition to school while considering the similarities and differences amongst the participant groups’ perspectives.

The model in Figure 3.2 shows how the study was conceptualized with the units of analysis (UA) of family, school, and community perspectives embedded within the case of beliefs about strengths and resources including expectations for helping CALD children’s school transition. The case as a whole is situated in the

context of one school in a CALD community, and is bounded by that community.

Baxter and Jack (2008) cite the benefit of embedded case study design to illuminate the case through analysis “*within* the subunits separately (within case analysis), *between* the different subunits (between case analysis) or *across* all of the subunits (cross-case analysis) (italics in original)” (p. 550).

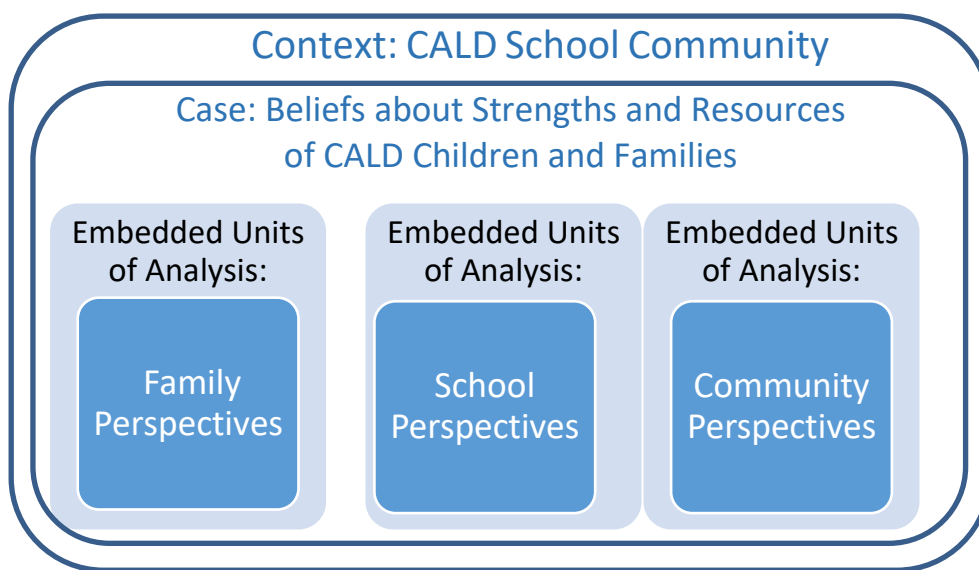


Figure 3.1. Embedded case study design of beliefs about the strengths and resources of CALD children and families in preparing children for school.

I paid particular attention to the similarities and differences amongst the three stakeholder groups' perspectives. Through collaborative and participatory discussions, participants were offered the opportunity to reflect and expand upon their experiences and potentially generate new knowledge. Using an embedded case study design presented me with the opportunity for a detailed, descriptive approach to the study and



ensured that viewpoints of the three stakeholder group participants were highlighted using the interview data.

### **3.5 The Research Site**

A number of factors were taken into consideration when identifying an appropriate site for the research. The first factor was to locate schools in a Lower Mainland school district of British Columbia that primarily served a CALD population. The EDI is a standardized population-based measure of the developmental status of kindergarten-aged children as reflected in teacher ratings for the five domains of physical health and wellbeing, social competence, emotional maturity, language and cognitive development, and communication skills and general knowledge. EDI results are used to help identify the strengths and needs of groups of children within their school districts and communities in order to help plan, implement and evaluate programs and inform policy decisions (Human Early Learning Partnership, 2019).

EDI ratings in the language and communication domains were considered to be the most pertinent for reflecting the perceptions of kindergarten teachers' identification of linguistic and cultural group differences for the present study. Both these domains assess children's ability to communicate in English (the language of instruction in most of the province's kindergarten classrooms) but do not provide any information on language skills beyond English. The EDI's identification of children's developmental outcomes based on English language competences may serve as one reasonable proxy

for children from linguistically and culturally diverse backgrounds (Milbrath & Guhn, 2019). Further, analyses of the different home language groups in the EDI database indicate that children's heritage language and culture may play a significant role in the kinds of strengths young children will call upon and the challenges they will encounter upon school entry (Guhn et al., 2007, 2016; Milbrath & Guhn, 2019).

### **3.5.1 Gaining access to the research site and the school district.**

In order to provide an information-rich case, *purposive sampling* was employed in order to find a paradigmatic exemplar (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993; Schwandt, 2007) of a school that recognizes the strengths and resources of CALD learners.

Upon approval from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) and with school district research approval, I contacted elementary school principals via a letter canvassing interest. These principals had been identified by an associate superintendent as leaders in the pool of schools with CALD populations. I confirmed that the schools fell within linguistically and culturally diverse neighbourhoods using the EDI's language and communications domain information.

From those schools indicating interest, principals were invited by means of a brief telephone interview to supply information as to how their school would meet school criteria outlined below. Of the five schools expressing interest in participation, I selected one school that best met the following criteria:

1. The student population was a good exemplar of the district's cultural and linguistic diversity.
2. The school principal was able to propose several practices employed by the school in identifying and supporting the strengths and resources of CALD learners and families.
3. Administrative support was committed to the timely return of informed consent letters from all participants and providing information regarding the cultural and linguistic diversity of kindergarten children enrolled in the school.

Letters of invitation (see Appendices A, B, and C) were then sent to potential participants in the following three groups:

- a. staff members working with CALD kindergarten children as identified by the school principal;
- b. adult family members of kindergarten children whose families use a language other than the language of instruction (English) and/or whose cultural background is different from mainstream culture;
- c. community members affiliated with the school and identified by the school staff. (e.g. community-based organization leaders, including faith-based organizations and immigrant and family services; early childhood professionals; intersectoral early childhood coalition members).

A poster (see Appendix D) and sign up sheet were also placed in the school's Strong Start Centre in order to access parents and caregivers of children entering

kindergarten attending the centre's early learning drop-in program. Those interested in participating contacted me directly by phone, or by email indicating their willingness to participate. Upon indication of willingness to participate, letters of consent (see Appendices A, B, and C) were sent to all potential participants.

### **3.5.2 The research site: school and community.**

The selected school for this study was located in a family-oriented working class neighbourhood in a large Canadian city within a metropolitan area with a population of approximately two million (Statistics Canada, 2013). According to the 2016 census (Statistics Canada, 2017), the neighbourhood has a population of approximately 51,000 with approximately 18,500 modest-and low-income households (median household income \$64,179; 19.4% of families with low income). The majority are families with children under 18 years at home. Fifty-four percent (54.5%) work outside the home. The family and household structure consists of just over 50% married or living common-law; 36% single; 7.9% separated or divorced; and 5.3% widowed. Twenty percent (20.1) of a total number of 13,720 families are lone parent families with children under six. Occupations include in order of frequency sales and service, business and management, science and health, education and social, community and government services, trades, resources, manufacturing utilities, and art, culture, recreation and sport.

It has the largest number of immigrants in all of the 23 neighbourhoods in this city. First-generation immigrants account for almost two-thirds of the residents (61.5%),

second-generation, just over a quarter (27%), and third-generation plus just over 11% (11.3). Sixty-four percent of the residents list a non-English mother tongue with Chinese languages, Tagalog, Vietnamese, as the most prevalent, but many other languages are represented. Over 40% (41.2) do not speak English at home but 87.3% claim conversational knowledge of English. Almost 78% (77.9) are from visible minorities and are ethnically diverse (predominately Chinese, Filipino, South Asian, and Southeast Asian).

It is one of the oldest neighbourhoods of the city with primarily multi-family homes (40.3% duplexes, 28.4% apartments, 18.9% detached houses) with a growing number of condominiums and multi-family residential developments, including affordable rental housing, springing up around the area. More than a third of residents are renters (41.6%). There is a substantial business community in several areas including a variety of ethnic-owned and ethnic-themed businesses. While there are several parks with playgrounds and sports fields, there is not a lot of green space. It is served by two public library branches as well as a community centre, neighbourhood house, public health centre, and five churches (Statistics Canada, 2011, 2017).

The school, with a population of approximately 400 kindergarten to grade seven students, is ethnically diverse with the majority of students learning English as an additional language at the time of the study. It is representative of the multicultural nature of the neighbourhood in which it is located. It offers childcare (before and after

school) and Strong Start, a drop-in program for parents and caregivers with children ages zero to five years old, and has access to programs offered by one of the school district's community link teams and the community's neighbourhood house such as sports, literacy, arts and culture, food and nutrition, and social and emotional learning based programs. In addition to two kindergarten classes, one K-1 split class, and two Grade 1 classes, the school has a non-enrolling kindergarten resource teacher who provides a range of support services to all kindergarten students with diverse learning needs.

### **3.6 Recruitment of the research participants**

Consistent with Bronfenbrenner's bioecological framework, participants eligible for this study were drawn from the developing child's early environments to focus on young CALD children's transition to school. Three groups of participants were formed for the purposes of this study and were termed Family, School, and Community using the pertinent context's label for theoretical consistency's sake. The purpose of this selection was to capture the range of beliefs and expectations regarding the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. The sample consisted of 34 participants.

#### **3.6.1 Family participants.**

Adult family members of children entering or attending kindergarten from CALD backgrounds in the designated school were included. While it was preferable that adult family members of kindergarten children were able to participate in an

interview in English, provisions were made for either a multicultural liaison worker or another family member or friend proficient in English to provide assistance if it was needed (which only occurred in one instance). Adult family members were recruited from the kindergarten classes and the Strong Start Centre in the school. Although thirteen parents initially agreed to participate, three parents subsequently declined – one moved and two had scheduling conflicts. As a result, 10 parents, including one couple, agreed to participate. Unlike in the other sociocultural contexts in the study, School and Community, all adult family members shared one role, that of parent.

### **3.6.2 School participants.**

School participants included all teachers and other school personnel who played an integral role in kindergarten children's lives in the designated school. I did not initially plan to include Grade 1 teachers but two of the teachers were very interested in the study and asked to be included.

### **3.6.3 Community participants.**

Community participants involved with CALD families from the designated school either directly or indirectly were invited to participate (community professionals in early childhood, immigrant and family services, community health, and public libraries). All ten community participants had some involvement with CALD children and/or their families.

### **3.7 Data Sources**

Data gathered through in-depth interviews were supplemented by demographic questionnaires, and publicly available documents. The in-depth interviews served as the primary data sources used in the study. The intent of interviews is to hear first-hand, participant perspectives in the form of “conversations with a purpose” (Burgess, 2002, p. 84) aimed at answering the research questions. It is through interaction between the participants that new knowledge is created: Denzin and Lincoln (2003b) argue that “the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific episodes of interaction” (p.48).

#### **3.7.1 Background questionnaires**

Demographic information was collected separately from the three stakeholder groups. School (group) stakeholders include both school-based and district staff; community (group) stakeholders include members of community-based organizations and service providers; and family (group) stakeholders include members with kindergarten-aged children from the ethno-cultural and linguistic groups within the school neighbourhood situated in the larger culturally and linguistically diverse community.

I surveyed participants' background data by means of a short questionnaire tailored to the relevant information for each participant group (see Appendix E). Demographic information for all participant groups included personal background



information concerning gender identity, age, education level, occupation, country of origin, ethnic identity, and languages spoken in the home. The family member questionnaire included additional personal and family background information about marital status, spouse age, and occupation, family and household members and the kindergarten child's early experiences. The school personnel questionnaire and the community-based member questionnaire also included information about training in early childhood education and/or child development and specific work experience with cultural and linguistic diversity. Some of the background information gathered was not used extensively in this study's analysis other than to provide a richer description of the study participants. The full details were intended for use in the second and third parts of the larger project mentioned in section 1.2 (e.g. training and work experience of school and community participants). However, the full data set is provided in Appendices G, H, and I in order to ensure that family participants were reasonably representative of the school neighbourhood being studied and to describe some aspects of underlying economic capital (cf. Bourdieu, 1986).

Participants were asked to dedicate approximately twenty minutes to complete the demographic questionnaire. Family participants, in particular, took more time to complete the questionnaire as they were eager to engage in conversation about questions pertaining to their children and their own immigration history. For family members uncomfortable with reading English, additional support with the

questionnaire was provided. Detailed demographic information yielded by the participants' background questionnaires is described below in Section 3.9.1.

### **3.7.2 Interviews**

An interview protocol was constructed with semi-structured questions to elicit participants' beliefs about young children's development and the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. The questions for the semi-structured interviews were crafted so that the participant was able to provide rich, detailed description and were supported by the study's research questions. The interview questions were open-ended to allow participants freedom to draw upon their lived experiences and thus enrich their responses.

The interview protocol served as a general guide during the interview process. I also employed probe questions such as, "Tell me more about that" to give the participants the opportunity to clarify and expand upon their responses. Some questions were tailored to the specific groups. For example, family participants were asked to comment about their own child whereas school and community participants were asked to comment about CALD children overall.

Before the interviews ended, participants were given the opportunity to provide additional information that they believed was relevant to the discussion. They provided any necessary clarification, and gave their final thoughts about the topic, the interview, and the research process. For the interview protocol, see Appendix F.

### **3.7.3 Documents and artifacts**

The most important use of documents in a case study is to confirm and supplement evidence from other sources (Yin, 2003). For purposes of triangulation, I collected several types of publicly available documents in addition to the interview transcripts and background questionnaires. These included documents from multiple sources to support prominent themes in the interview data, including information provided by the district, school, and community, information retrieved from websites, and artifacts such as photos of classroom displays, brochures, as well as HELP EDI documents profiling the neighbourhood in which the school is situated. These documents were collected and memos were created to capture ideas and insights for important understandings of the community and school's priorities for addressing cultural and linguistic diversity. Examples are offered in section 3.9 under the Coding heading.

## **3.8 Data Collection Procedures**

After receiving the consent form, subjects had approximately one week to make a decision whether or not to participate and submit their consent forms. Participation in the study began with the administration of the background questionnaires which also served as an icebreaker to allow me to build rapport with the participants, gain contextual and setting background information that would inform the subsequent

interviews, and permit maximum flexibility in participants' responses (Mishler, 1979; Patton, 2014).

Individual in-depth interviews were held with all 34 participants to explore their beliefs about young children's learning and developmental strengths and resources when they start kindergarten, including expectations about the roles and responsibilities of family, school, and community members in preparing young children from CALD backgrounds for their transition to school. I used a semi-structured, open-ended questioning format in order to explore and understand participants' beliefs. At the beginning of each interview, I explained the purpose of the study, obtained consent, and reviewed the background questionnaire.

Throughout the interviews, I engaged with the participants by listening actively - probing, summarizing, paraphrasing, and reflecting in order to clarify and understand what I was hearing (Kvale, 2007; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Each interview took approximately one hour to complete. All interviews were audio-recorded and notes were made after each interview to capture first impressions of the interview. The recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim.

The services of a multicultural liaison worker attached to the school were offered if parents needed assistance with English. However, none of the participants requested the services. In the case of one interview with a family member, a friend, who was also a participant, provided interpretation when needed. Family interviews took place in the

home and school interviews took place in the school or another location at a mutually agreed upon time. Community interviews also took place at a mutually agreed upon time and location, usually at the workplace of the community interviewee.

### **3.9 Data Organization and Analysis**

Data analysis is a process of systematically searching, arranging, and creating meaning from raw data (Johnson & Christensen, 2008). It requires coding and searching for relationships and patterns until a holistic picture emerges (Biklen & Bogdan, 2007). When developing a system of coding and themes, it is important to go back to the data recursively to ensure completeness and comprehensiveness (Bazeley, 2013; Miles et al., 2014; Saldaña, 2013). Before beginning coding, I reread the entire data set and listened again to the recordings and took note of various conversational nuances in the interviews such as emphases, pauses, and emotional expressions in order to develop a holistic understanding, a process I continued throughout the analysis. All of the data collected from the study was stored and managed, within NVivo Plus 12 (QSR International, 2018), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software program<sup>1</sup>. Use of this research tool allowed me to systematically document and apply my codes

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<sup>1</sup> Computer-assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) is a well-established research tool that helps to enhance trustworthiness through increased transparency (O’Kane et al., 2019; Woods et al., 2015), supports a deeper level of analysis than manual coding (Paulus & Lester, 2016), and facilitates coding to multiple categories and deeper exploration of the data (Wickham & Woods, 2005). It is important to note that these programs are not capable of, nor do they replace the intellectual and conceptualizing processes required to transform data, nor can they make any kind of judgment (King, 2004; Thorne, 2000).

throughout the data analysis, in addition to comparing and contrasting data with shared codes. It also allowed me to quickly retrieve the original source context as needed. An interpretive analysis approach as it pertains to cultural and linguistic diversity was used to analyze all sets of the data.

**Demographic data.** Demographic data from the background questionnaires were entered into an Excel spreadsheet and then imported into NVivo as a case classification sheet with pre-assigned attributes and values. By using case classifications, the NVivo software allowed me to not only integrate demographic data with interview data but also to make comparisons both within and across groups of participants using the query and visualization tools in order to examine the intersectionality between various attributes such as ethnicity, home languages, education, occupation, and experience with CALD children and families. I will not report on all of those intersectional analyses because they are beyond the scope of this dissertation study's research objectives.

**Interview and memo data.** I generated draft verbatim transcripts from the audio-recordings of the interviews using Dragon NaturallySpeaking 12 speech to text software (2012). I carefully reviewed those transcripts and corrected them against the audio-recordings manually and coded the identity of the participants to protect their confidentiality. I then uploaded the files to NVivo for subsequent coding to these transcript files. Summaries of interview notes made following the interview sessions were also reviewed, transcribed, and uploaded to NVivo. In NVivo, cases represent the

‘units of observation’ being studied. In this study, interview participants were created as individual participant cases and assigned a case classification which would allow for comparison of subgroups across different attribute values.

**Coding.** According to Charmaz (2001), the purpose of coding data is to determine the critical link between data collection and the explanation of meaning. To define the idea of code, Saldaña (2013) states that, “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (p. 3). I coded and analyzed the data in this study using first and second cycle processes (Saldaña, 2013). Inductive coding was used, whereby the findings were derived from the research objectives and multiple readings and interpretations of the data themselves, rather than an existing coding framework. That said, the theoretical frameworks of habitus and capital and social contextual development shaped the analysis throughout. All coding was cyclical.

The purpose of first-cycle coding is to lay the foundation for further data analysis and drawing conclusions ((Miles et al., 2014). Following Saldaña’s (2013) guidelines, I drew upon several coding strategies which included initial or open coding (e.g. *spending time*) to gain first impressions of the data, analyzing the interview transcripts line-by-line, noting key words and phrases; descriptive coding which assigned labels to aspects of data in order to summarize a topic (e.g. *programs and services*); attribute coding of the

demographic information (e.g. *languages spoken*); magnitude coding which entails assigning intensity, frequency, direction, presence, or evaluative content to codes ( e.g. *high, few expectations*); simultaneous coding or ‘double’ coding; evaluation coding – assigning judgments (e.g. *language as an asset; diversity as deficit*). Additional memos were recorded at this time to capture ideas about emerging concepts, links to other data, and to the literature. I then went through the initial codes and grouped key words and phrases by subtopic and theme utilizing subcoding (e.g. nesting *self-regulation* under *socialization*) and structural coding methods such as assigning a conceptual phrase to the data (e.g. *expectations about roles and responsibilities*) that relates to a research question (RQ2). NVivo enabled me to apply different coding strategies both quickly and efficiently.

The second phase of the analysis included pattern and axial coding, strategies borrowed from grounded theory. Pattern coding was used to group and categorize similarly coded data in order to identify emergent themes and patterns of relationships across the transcripts. I combined codes that were similar, such as *cultural conflict* and *cultural differences*. Since these two initial codes were interwoven and contained a lot of overlapping information, the two were combined into one code: *cultural diversity*. Axial coding was used to describe category properties (i.e. attributes) by reorganizing data from the initial coding that were redundant or repetitive. For example, when multiple instances of coding for different types of “barriers” recurred throughout the data,



*barriers* was recoded as an attribute of a theme entitled *Access to capital*, which allowed for comparisons across the data using NVivo's matrix coding query tool. Reorganizing the data into hierarchical structures using these different coding strategies was accomplished both quickly and efficiently with NVivo. Definitions were also revised to help clarify meaning. Throughout data analysis, these codes were revisited, revised, and applied to all collected interview and questionnaire data. Collected documents were not systematically analysed but were drawn upon informally to add rich description to the analysed findings by providing additional information and context to school and community programs, services, and events. For example, the school website provided additional information about the school population as well as the school plan; information sheets distributed at a Welcome to Kindergarten event outlined expectations for children starting kindergarten; and brochures from the public library furnished fuller detail of programs on offer for children and families.

I went back and forth through the data comparing participants' responses to construct theoretical categories (e.g. Social inclusion). Patterns among the transcripts were identified with final analytic decisions made as themes and theoretical constructs related to the research questions (described more fully in 3.9.2). I connected the categories and related concepts to identify categorical themes that described participants' beliefs about the strengths and resources of CALD children and the ways in which they can be supported in their transition to school. For example, participants

talked about how having cultural knowledge and the importance of learning about culture contributes to recognizing culture as a resource or a strength. I grouped the first two coding categories (*cultural knowledge* and *importance of learning about culture*) under the concept, *culture as a resource or strength* which in turn, I incorporated under the theme *Engaging with culture* in different contexts. Subsequent cross-case analyses looked for links within and across the three groups of participants. Using NVivo's visualization tools, particularly modelling and matrices, allowed me to examine the data in many different ways, looking for potential links between categories. For example, initially grouping nodes (containers of coded data) with interview questions allowed me to see the connections amongst them which then led me to define concepts such as beliefs and expectations and contemplate those connections using NVivo's concept map tool.

Coding was not mutually exclusive and excerpts of transcriptions could be assigned to more than one theme. A feature in NVivo called coding stripes which shows what text is coded at what node facilitated the comparison of categories and developing links between them. Figure 3.3 shows an excerpt of text from the node *being multilingual*. As shown in the coding stripes, the third reference is also coded at *language as an asset* and *ties with home country*. Visually comparing the coding categories made it apparent that these two codes could become subcategories of a major theme, Maintaining home language and in a further analysis as Facilitators in Social inclusion.

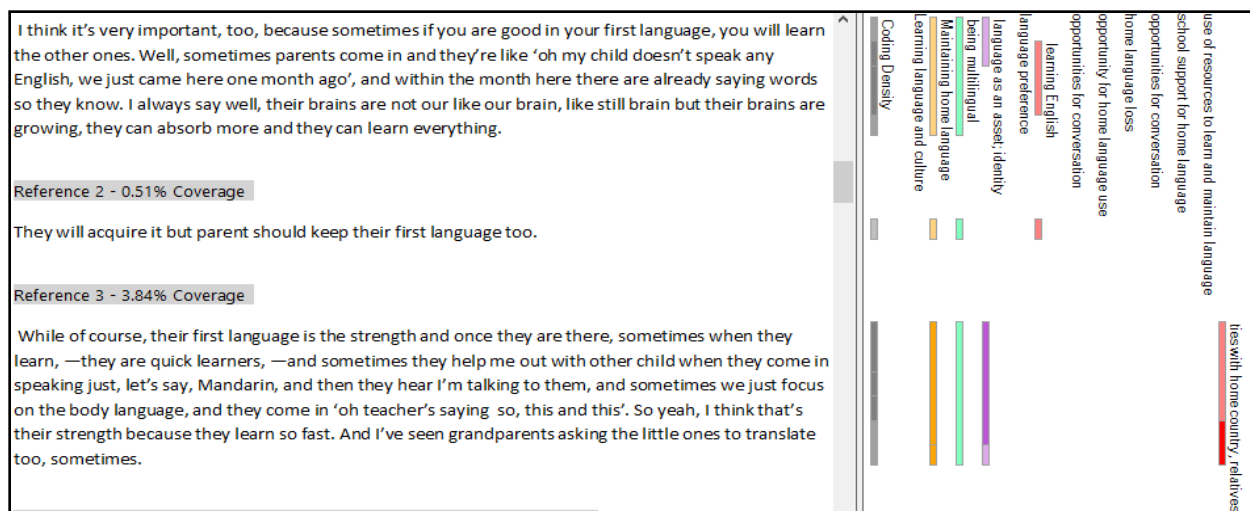


Figure 3.2. Screenshot of coding stripes in NVivo.

A summary of the coding analysis process using selected first and second cycle coding methods and techniques from Saldaña (2013) is illustrated in Figure 3.4 and shows that the process is iterative in practice.

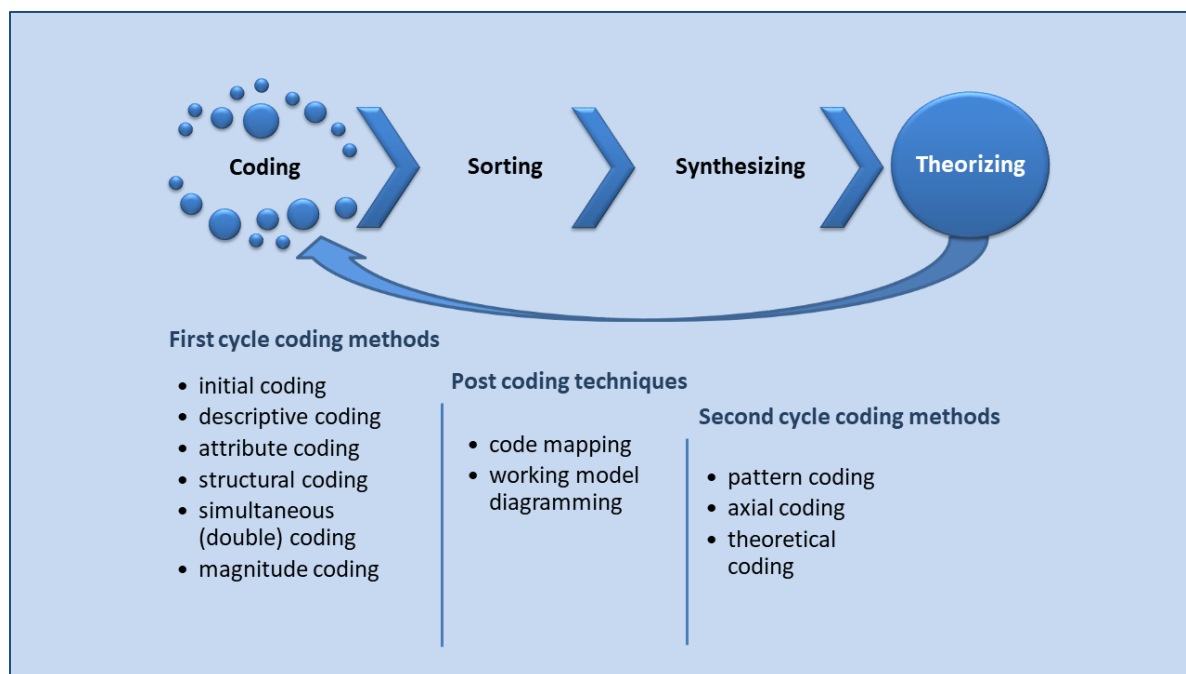


Figure 3.3. Summary of coding analysis process using selected coding methods and techniques from Saldaña (2013).

**Memoing and Mapping.** Throughout the data analysis, I used memoing as a strategy to understand the data more deeply, recording reflective thoughts about coding decisions and ideas for further analysis. I also used NVivo's mapping tools extensively to identify emergent patterns in the data, as well as to facilitate understandings of the relationships between the data and the study's research questions. Visual modelling of the data allowed me to see connections amongst the codes, themes, and categories, and to consider the development of theoretical constructs.

**Cross-Case Analyses.** In NVivo, I developed a case matrix and was able to capture the demographic information for each group of participants. I also used case matrices to develop a participant group case analysis approach to analyzing data, comparing family, school, and participant responses both within and across groups. Overall, the matrix was a tabular format that collected and arranged data for organization and data reduction by putting it in one place, which permitted a detailed analysis and assisted with cross-case analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). This is regarded as the best method to identify similarities and differences amongst participants and is also important for data reduction. The matrix format allowed me to examine more closely similarities and contrasts within each group of participants' responses and between the three participant groups. It also helped me to organize clusters of ideas, and to count the number of participants who referenced similar

themes, strategies, and points (Miles et al., 2014). An example of the matrix format is included in Table 3.1 with number of coded references and in parentheses, number of participants in each group contributing those references. Each cell provided links to the coded references and the cases of the coding intersections between the two lists. The actual counts in these matrices was not the focus of these analyses but rather the patterns of distribution across and within groups which allowed me to interrogate similarities and differences and identify any anomalies.

Table 3.1

*Example of a Case Matrix with Coded References (Number of Participants) of Barriers and Facilitators to Accessing Capital by Participant Group*

Access to Capital			
	Family References (n)	Community References (n)	School References (n)
Barriers	49 (10)	55 (10)	176 (14)
Facilitators	59 (10)	112 (10)	180 (14)

*Note.* As noted by Maxwell (2010), the use of numbers is to illustrate the location of patterns in the data to guide further interpretation.

### 3.9.1 Participant Demographic Information

In the brief description of demographic information regarding the present study's participants that follows, it is useful to read the findings with an understanding of the range and backgrounds of the stakeholder groups. While the case study design is not intended to support any form of multivariate analysis, I nonetheless provide

demographic information not only to enrich the description of participant groups but to demonstrate that the sample is reasonably representative of the community.

**Family.** Of the 10 family participants, nine families with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were represented in this study. There were seven female and three male family participants, including one couple who took part in the study. Nine participants were either married or in common law relationships; one participant was a divorced single parent. For one of the families, the mother was primarily functioning as a single parent as the father was pursuing a doctoral degree in Australia. Ages ranged from 27 years to 47 years for participants and their spouses. For the participating couple, the female spouse was born in Canada and is a monolingual English speaker. The other nine participants had arrived in Canada ranging from as early as 23 years previous to just four years ago. None had arrived in Canada as refugees or as economic immigrants. Countries of origin, ethnic identity, and languages used in the homes, of participants are illustrated in Figure 3.5. The families in this study reflected the demographic makeup of the neighbourhood in which the study was situated (as described in 3.6.1.2), specifically in terms of immigrant status, ethnic diversity, and languages spoken at home.

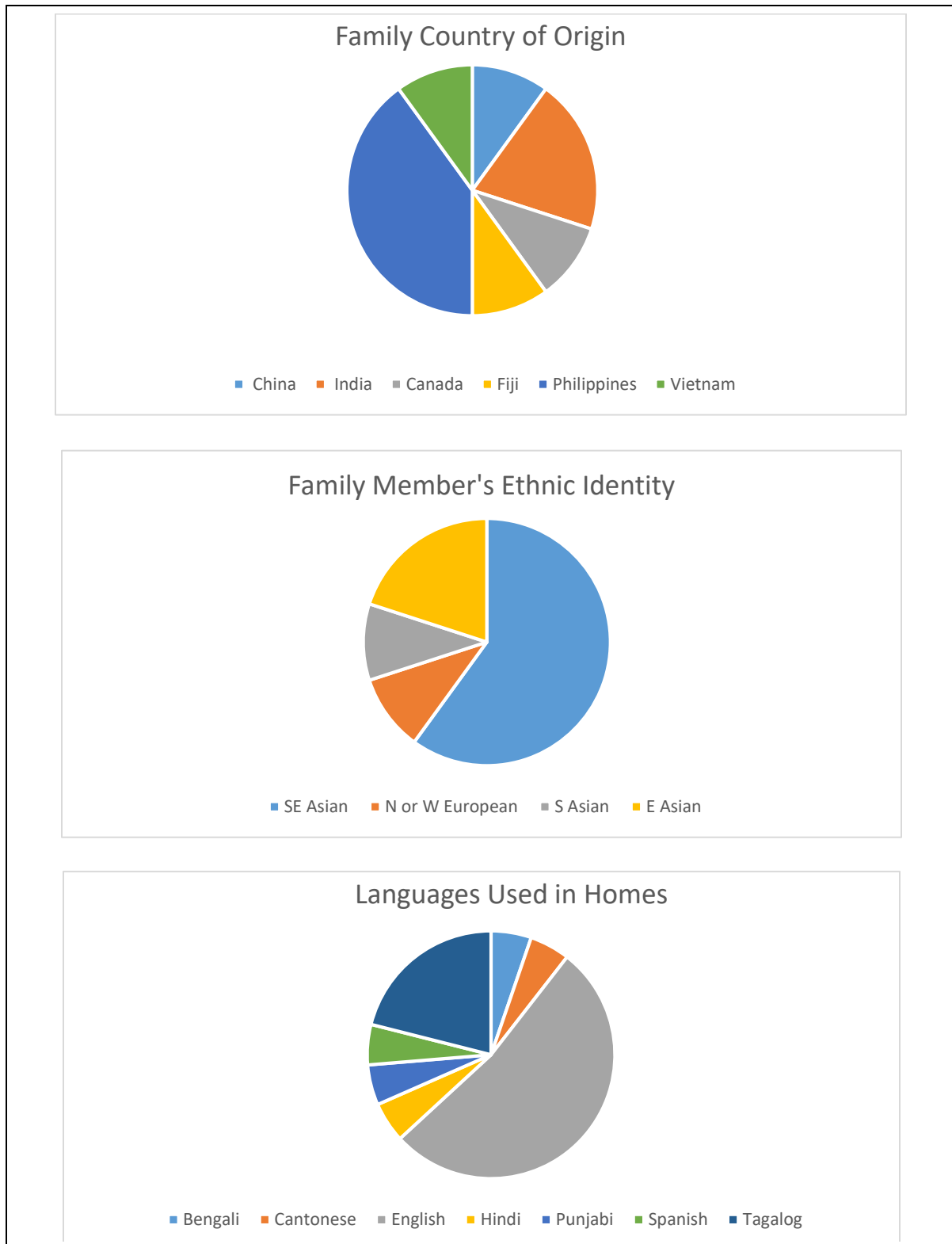


Figure 3.4. Distribution of country of origin, ethnic identity, and home language across family participants.

Education levels attained ranged from elementary to post secondary education with the latter being most represented (7 participants) which is slightly higher than the neighbourhood average, just below sixty percent. Eight of the participants worked outside the home. Occupations included accountant, bookkeeper/receptionist, cleaner, tow truck driver, warehouse worker, realtor, and information technology worker. Spousal occupations included businessperson, homemaker, driveway sealer, cook, bookkeeper/receptionist, PhD student, and comptroller.

The kindergarten aged children of the family participants included four girls and five boys. Three of the children had older siblings and three children had younger siblings. All of the children had participated in some kind of early childhood experiences including preschool, daycare, parent-child programs, faith-based programs and parks and recreational programs. Parents all reported that their children looked forward to starting school. Languages spoken by the children included Bengali, Mandarin, Hindi, Punjabi, Tagalog, Spanish, and English. Two of the children spoke English primarily at home, despite their mothers' limited English proficiency. Additionally, languages understood but not spoken by some of the children included Cantonese, Korean, and Spanish. The full data set generated from NVivo appears in Appendix G.

**School.** School participants included nine individuals based at the case study school including two kindergarten teachers, two Grade 1 teachers, a kindergarten/



Grade 1 teacher, a kindergarten resource teacher, teacher librarian, school principal, and an office administrative assistant. Only one of the teachers lived in the study neighbourhood. Five participants affiliated with the school though not based exclusively at the school included an area counsellor, a speech and language pathologist, a youth and family worker, and two multicultural liaison workers. The 14 participants ranged in ages from their 30s to 60s with twelve female and two male participants. Four school participants spoke additional languages. With the exception of the multicultural liaison workers, all the participants are white, born in Canada, and speak English as their first language. Their ethnic identity along with the languages they used in their homes are summarized in Figure 3.6.

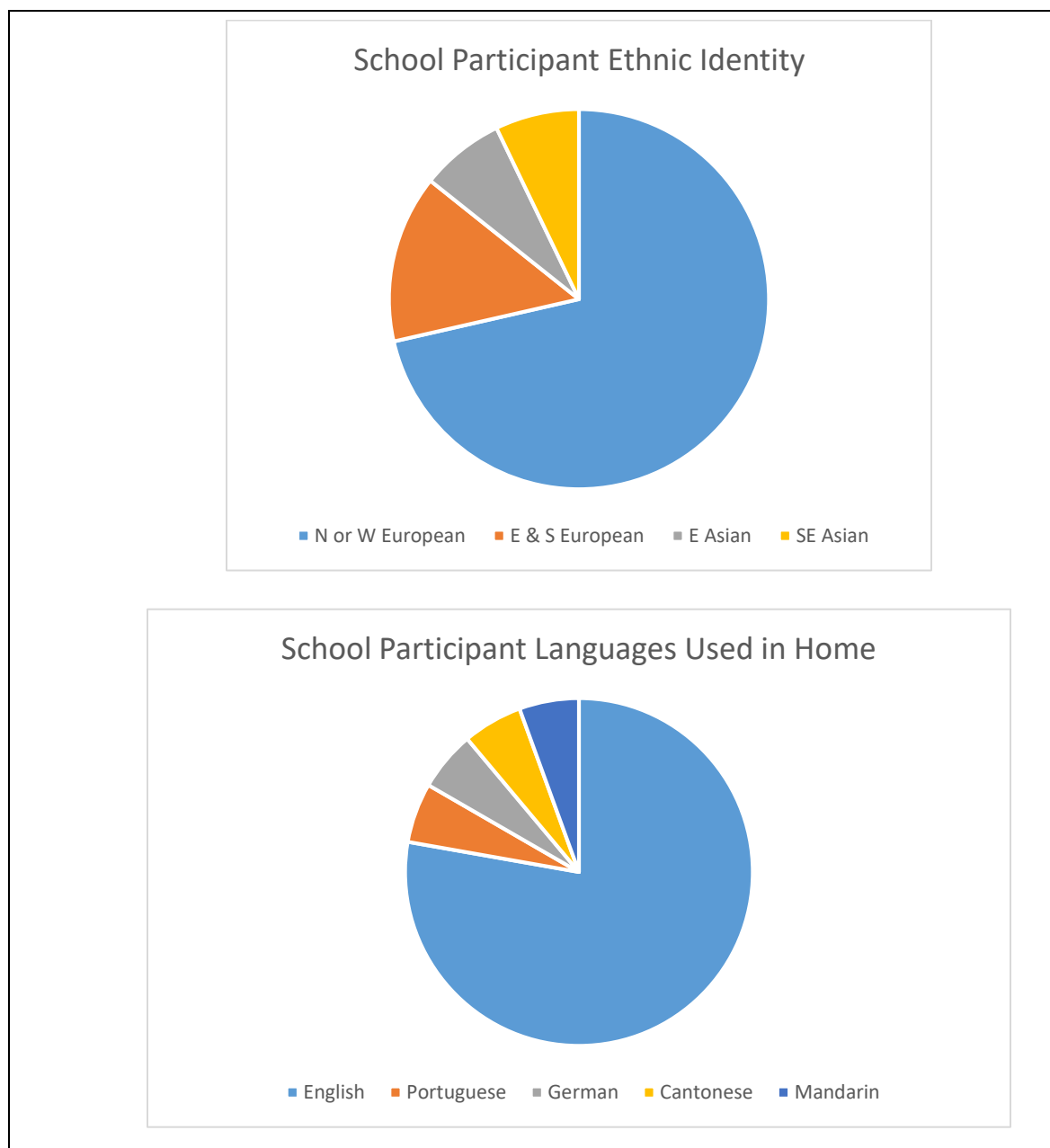


Figure 3.5. Distribution of ethnic and home languages across school participants.

Thirteen participants had post secondary education: five participants had postgraduate degrees, six participants had graduate degrees, and one participant had a post secondary diploma. Seven participants had degrees in early childhood, two had obtained ECE certificates, and one had attended workshops focussed on early

childhood. One participant had a high school education and no training in child development, early childhood, or cultural and linguistic diversity. Participants' number of years of work experience working in education and specifically with young children, CALD families, and the case study school are shown in Table 3.2. All of the classroom teachers and the administrative staff had over 10 years of experience working with CALD children and families. The full data set excerpted from NVivo appears in Appendix H.

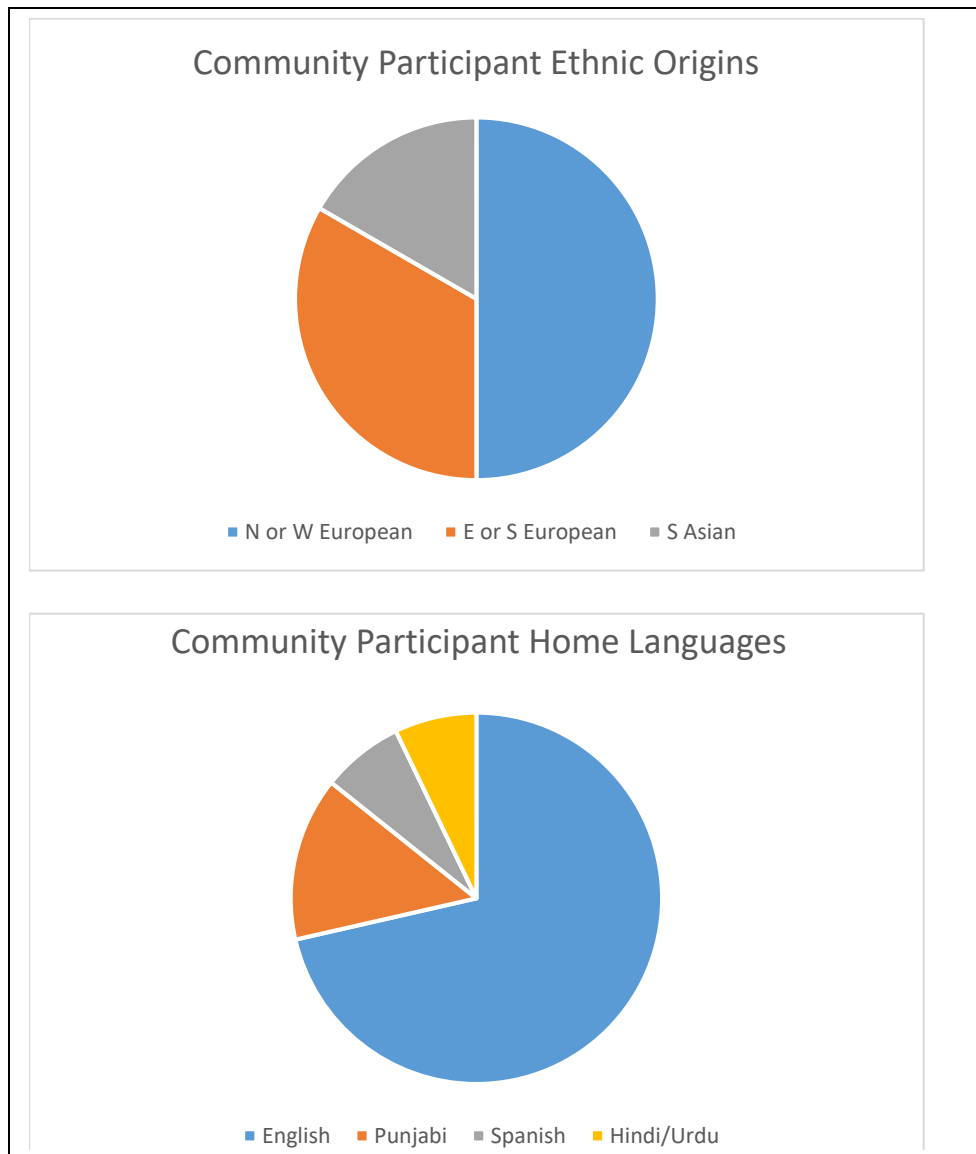
Table 3.2

*Distribution of Work Experience for School Participants*

Years	Worked in Education	Worked with Young Children	Worked with CALD Families	Worked at School
<5	2	2	3	0
>5	0	0	0	8
>10	12	12	11	0

**Community.** Community stakeholders included 10 participants ranging in ages from their 30s to 50s; nine female participants and one male participant. Three of the participants spoke additional languages other than English. All the participants had received post secondary education. In addition, all the participants had received training in child development, working with young children, and training in cultural and linguistic diversity. Two of the participants identified as South Asian and the

remainder as European heritage. Distributions of ethnic identity and home languages for these participants are summarized in Figure 3.6.



*Figure 3.6. Distribution of ethnic origins and home languages of community participants.*

Seven community participants were affiliated with a community neighbourhood house in the case study school's catchment area. These included the childcare coordinator, director of child and family development services, director of community services, preschool director, family development coordinator, family programs

coordinator, and intercultural neighbourhood development community strategist.

Other community participants included a community public health nurse, a community librarian for the early years, and a Strong Start and Ready, Set, Learn program<sup>2</sup> facilitator. Nine participants had worked in this community for more than five years – eight participants for more than 10 years. Nine participants had worked in community projects or services, including working with culturally and linguistically diverse children and families for more than ten years. The full data set excerpted from NVivo appears in Appendix I.

### **3.9.2 Development of Themes and Constructs**

As described in Section 3.9, after initial coding of the data in NVivo for which I had developed 122 preliminary descriptive codes, I began looking for emerging thematic patterns in the data, refining and organizing the preliminary codes into broad descriptive and thematic categories, inductively identifying analytical concepts and ideas that seemed to cluster together. By connecting and consolidating those categories, I was able to identify a core cluster of themes and their associated subthemes that categorized all of the participants' statements of beliefs. These themes were interrelated and intersected at various points as shown in the description of my use of the matrix

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<sup>2</sup> Strong Start and Ready Set Learn are provincially sponsored early learning programs that provide school-based early learning services for pre-kindergarten aged children and their families. Their intent is to facilitate partnerships between families, schools, and local community agencies (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2018a)

coding tool in NVivo, below. The most salient themes that emerged are shown in Table 3.3, including the number of references coded in the corpus across participant groups. As noted elsewhere, it is less the frequencies themselves and more the distribution patterns that helped me assess how the thematic material bears upon each of the research questions.

Table 3.3  
*References Coded to Themes Distributed across Groups (Participants)*

Theme	Group			
	School (14)	Community (10)	Family (10)	<b>Total (34)</b>
Number of References				
Engaging with culture	145	88	69	302
Maintaining home language	124	63	56	243
Social inclusion	156	44	56	256
Helping children develop	156	97	133	386
Helping children learn language and culture	48	31	34	113
Supporting school transition	81	65	63	209
Programs and Services	86	52	33	171
Collaborative Practice	114	100	40	254
Accessing Capital: Barriers	176	56	49	281
Accessing Capital: Facilitators	180	112	59	351

Using the matrix coding tool in NVivo, I further sorted the relevant themes into conceptually clustered matrices (Miles et al., 2014) in order to identify patterns amongst themes and enable me to offer a more nuanced interpretation of the interrelationships of stakeholders based on attribute values across a range of range of experiences, attitudes or emotions. For example, the themes of Engaging with culture, Maintaining home language, and Social inclusion, contained attributes coded as Barriers or Facilitators. After examining these attributes across the themes in a matrix query, I created an additional theme, *Accessing capital*, which then allowed me to track similarities and differences in terms of *barriers* and *facilitators* across themes and by participant group (family, school, and community). This theme and its two attributes were subsequently reconceptualised as the construct labelled Opportunities to Access Capital. These sorts of outcomes of the analytic process are developed and discussed in detail in Chapter 4 in the context of their use to organize the study's findings.

The three sociocultural contexts of Family, School, and Community played a central role in my growing understanding of how the themes interacted with the actors. These contexts situated the actions that participants believed to be important to support CALD children and families and were realized by statements, for example, about families engaging with their children, the school, or community, or the school's role in children's orientation to kindergarten. Again, using a data matrix, I examined the

intersection between the attributes of stakeholder roles and responsibilities in the three sociocultural contexts and the various themes.

A set of four analytic constructs were created by aligning the themes identified in the interview responses, key elements from the conceptual framework and scholarly sources, and the three research questions. The constructs that I settled upon are outlined as follows:

Construct 1: Negotiating Cultural Identity. This construct was drawn inductively from both from Bourdieu's theory and Cummins', Trueba's and Moll's claims that negotiating cultural identity is essential to culturally diverse students' success. The themes of maintaining home language and engaging with culture were aligned with their importance to group identity and belonging and the consideration of an additional language as an asset.

Construct 2: Opportunities to Access Capital: Barriers and Facilitators. Drawn principally from Bourdieu's and Yosso's theories of capital, this construct served to describe the barriers and facilitators in supporting CALD children's transition to school as they related to the themes in the data of Maintaining home language, Engaging with culture, and Social inclusion.

Construct 3: Roles and Responsibilities in Supporting CALD Children. Both Bourdieu's concept of habitus as it relates to beliefs of how children develop and Bronfenbrenner's theory regarding the connections and interactions among the



child's microsystems of family, school, and community that support development are used to structure the findings. In addition, research on school transition informs the description of participants' expectations for what was required for successful school transition. I used both a thematic and contextual analysis to address what the responsibilities are and who is responsible for carrying them out.

Construct 4: Practices that Support CALD Children and Families. This construct encompassed the themes of Programs and Services and Collaborative Practice. Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as reflected in Moll's and Yosso's work, supported my analysis of beliefs about practices that best served CALD children and families. Cummins' view that collaborative power relations are a necessary component of CALD children's educational success was also taken into account.

The topical relationships I posited amongst themes, constructs, and contexts is outlined in Figure 3.8. In addition, I illustrate how those themes and constructs will address the study's three research questions.

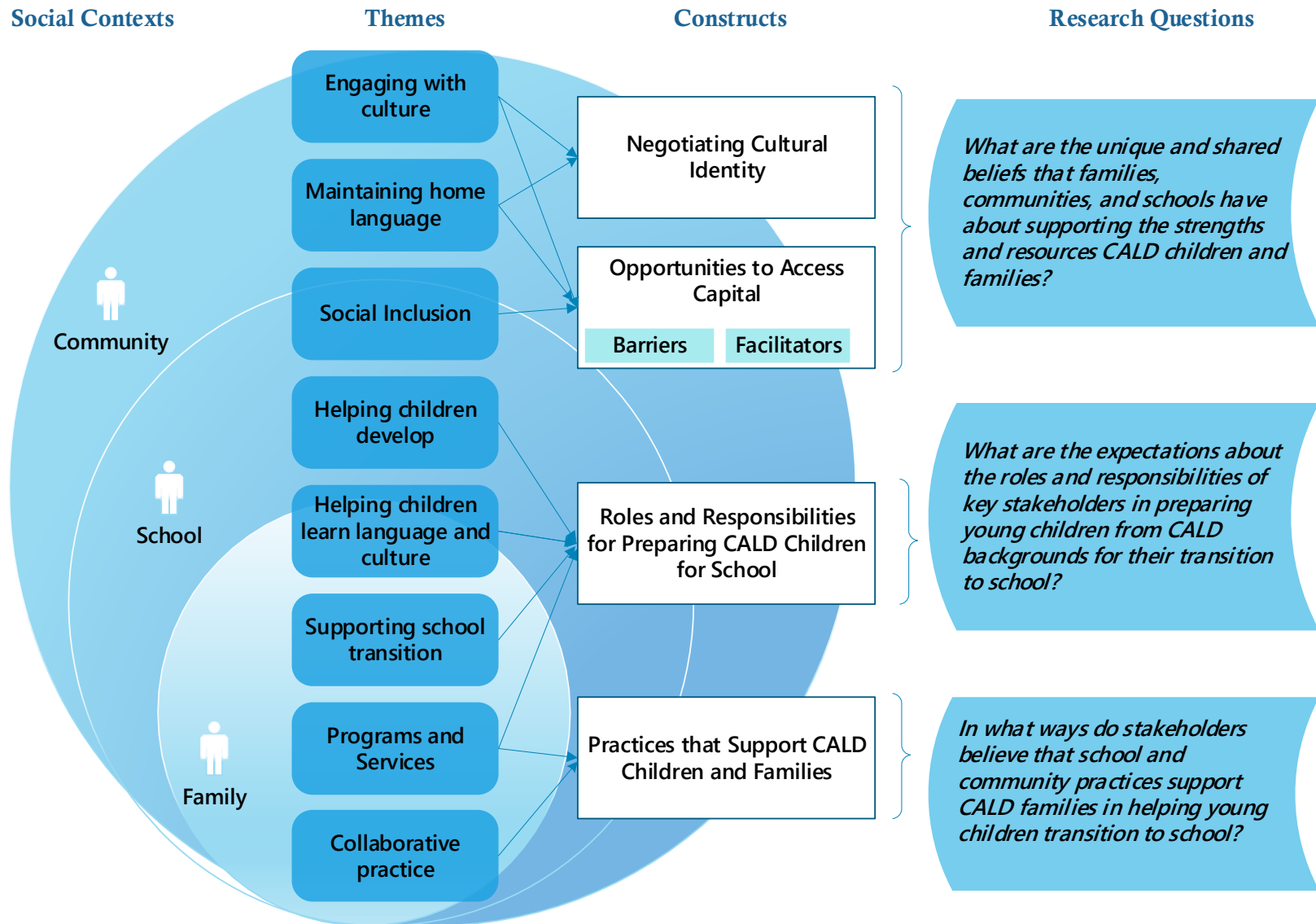


Figure 3.7. Sociocultural contexts, themes, and constructs with associated research questions.

Category refinement remained an ongoing process throughout the data analysis. There was a continuous examination of the relationships amongst categories to combine or to subdivide further. Throughout this process, rules for inclusion of data were reviewed and modified as needed as a means of ensuring validity and reliability in the analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003a).

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

Before I began each interview, I reviewed the letter of consent with the participants to ensure they were cognizant of the protections and ethical guidelines that were followed during the study, including the voluntary nature of the study, their right to withdraw at any time without any negative impact, and protection of their identity. I respected all participants' rights during the research process and data collection stage. After I collected the interview data, I removed all data that could identify the participants; therefore, I coded the interviews to match each participant. In doing this, participants' identities were protected; however, I knew the identity of the participants, which I kept confidential. Before beginning the interviews, I informed all participants that the interviews would be audio-recorded, which allowed me to make a verbatim transcription. I provided participants with my contact information and the contact information for my dissertation supervisor if they had any further questions or concerns about the research study. I also provided participants with the contact information for the UBC Office of Research Services if they wished to talk privately about their rights as

participants. Participants were also told that a summary report of the research findings would be made available to each participant after the study was completed and approved.

### **3.11 The Researcher's Positionality**

Qualitative methods emphasize the researcher's role as active participant in the study (Creswell, 2013). For the present study, I, the researcher, served as the principal instrument in data collection, and the interpreter of data findings (Stake, 2005). I primarily situate myself in this study as an outsider endeavouring to gain an understanding of participants' beliefs about the strengths of CALD families and respectfully acknowledging their perspectives. I do however, bring some aspects of an insider perspective through my personal experiences as mother advocating for my children starting school in a language and culture other than their and my own. I also share an insider perspective with school participants through my many years as an educator of CALD children and families with extensive collaboration with community agencies in the course of that work.

I am a white, Anglo-heritage bilingual woman born in Canada, and the mother of two adult bilingual children. I have over 15 years of professional experience working with both adults and children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. I began my teaching career with recent immigrant adults followed by ten years of professional experience with children with special needs in language and literacy

development, the latter involving working intensively with their families. Through my graduate course work and research, I studied in more depth both theory and research related to the interaction between home, school, and communities and how cultural and linguistic differences play a part in that interaction. Additionally, my role as a university researcher allowed me to work over the years with a wide range of teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse children, as well as with the children themselves.

My position as a researcher in the school context, and with the families and their communities is one of an outsider, despite my previous experience of being a teacher and working with diverse families. With families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, in particular, an exploratory inquiry into family beliefs and expectations, the potential for unequal research relationships required constant vigilance. However, this study's focus upon families' strengths and resources (Dunst et al., 2000, 2002; Green et al., 2005; Rogoff et al., 2017) enabled me to build collaborative and trusting relationships with all those involved in the study. In addition, the study's focus on the shared concern of enhancing the opportunities for successful school experiences for CALD young learners served to ameliorate the differences among participants and researcher.

In this study, I attempt to describe the knowledge and understandings of all the participants in this particular setting. However, I am aware of my strong conviction that educational institutions should be attentive to enhancing equity of opportunity for all

children, viewing the array of diverse backgrounds and experiences as sources of strength. Further, I cannot assume a lack of empathy or understanding exists among those who have not had close ties with cultural and linguistic diversity. While investigating the multiple beliefs of families, school- and community-based stakeholders on the strengths and resources children bring to school, I acknowledge my own beliefs and values about diversity and opportunity, how they relate to the participants, and how they shape my commentary.

### **3.12 Issues of Trustworthiness**

Criteria for judging the quality of qualitative research have been articulated by a number of writers to ensure qualitative research meets the need for trustworthiness in terms of rigour and relevance (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mertens, 2009; Morrow, 2005). Guba and Lincoln suggest that four factors be considered in establishing the trustworthiness of findings from qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Their criteria were adopted as guiding principles for the analysis and interpretation of findings in the present study.

#### **3.12.1 Credibility**

Credibility is defined as the degree to which a researcher is justified in making certain claims. This study addressed credibility by data triangulation, member checks, peer examination, and reflexivity. Triangulation also assisted in answering the research questions and contributed to the validity of the research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Yin,

2009). A culturally sensitive approach to data collection combined qualitative and quantitative information from interviews, questionnaires, document analysis, field notes, memos, and a researcher journal maintained throughout the interview and data collection process to continuously reflect and analyze the data in alignment with this study's research questions and conceptual framework (Creswell, 2013).

I also conducted member checks at various points within the interview first, by restating what had been said to confirm the accuracy of participants' responses and second, by summarizing at the end of an interview to ascertain that I had accurately reflected the participant's thoughts. Mertens (2015) describes member checks as a safeguard which requires the interviewer to summarize what respondents have said during their interviews to ensure that the main concerns expressed by the individuals are accurately understood. Due to time constraints, participants did not have the opportunity to read and review their written transcripts.

Peer examination and expert consultation were used during data analyses. I met with two colleagues to discuss and analyze the data from randomly selected interviews during the initial and second cycle coding (Saldaña, 2016) where we negotiated emerging concepts and categories and themes to achieve internal consistency (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). I also consulted intensively on the analysis used in this project with two researchers with expertise in qualitative research, particularly in using NVivo to support qualitative data analysis (P. Bazeley, personal communication, April 23, 2015;

K. Jackson, January 25, 2016). Each of these consultations provided detailed feedback on the coding structure and conceptual analysis. I also met with my supervisory committee to discuss progress and analytic procedures throughout data analysis. During these discussions, I reflected on the reliability of the developing codes and themes, and identified next steps in the data analysis, further ensuring credibility. In addition, I presented my research at national and international conferences, where I received peer feedback that helped me refine the methods and design and to help ensure that the analysis was grounded in the data.

Reflexivity was addressed by endeavouring to maintain a reflexive stance towards my own and the participants' beliefs, values, and experiences during the interviews, a research journal where I kept notes throughout the research process, and including code mapping, and working model diagramming (Saldaña, 2016). Mapping and modelling allowed me to visualize my conceptual thinking as I worked towards my conclusions. I documented the analysis procedures and kept code note memos within NVivo to record data collection and analysis procedures and the development of codes and categories. I kept detailed memos throughout the study to help actively explore my understandings during data collection and analysis, keeping a detailed account of the processes I employed during each stage (Maxwell, 2013). The memos provided an opportunity for critical self-reflection and helped me further understand the processes I employed to analyze the data (Finlay, 2002).



### **3.12.2 Transferability**

Transferability refers to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be transferred to other contexts with other respondents. The thick description of the study and purposive sampling of the participants facilitates its transferability to other contexts with other participants. However, as Yin points out “case studies are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes” (2009, p. 10).

### **3.12.3 Dependability**

Dependability refers to the degree the findings will endure over time by ensuring the process is logical, traceable, and well documented (Schwandt, 2007). To ensure dependability in this research study, I created an audit trail where I kept multiple documents for cross-checking, including interview notes, audiotaped interviews and their transcripts, meeting notes, reflective thoughts, and an account of all research decisions and activities. In addition, I used the code-recode strategy whereby sections of the data were coded twice with at least two weeks between coding sessions in order to compare whether the results were the same or different, enhancing dependability. Through the use of the query tools in NVivo, including coding and matrix queries, I was able to search thoroughly for evidence of findings and emerging themes across sources of data and participant groups to solidify my conclusions.

#### **3.12.4 Confirmability**

Confirmability refers to the extent to which the researcher adopts a neutral stance to avoid bias in analytic or interpretive judgements. I manage this risk by reflexivity (awareness and critical self-reflection on my own potential biases), and triangulation. In addition, throughout the interviews I utilized active listening skills such as reflecting, summarizing, paraphrasing, and probing in order to clarify and understand what I was hearing from participants (Morrow, 2005). I responded with empathy to aspects of participants' stories, attempting to engage with participants from the stance of a curious learner (Thorne, 2008).

#### **3.13 Chapter Summary**

The chapter includes a rationale for using a qualitative approach to the study. The embedded case study design is described, along with the setting. Participant selection and their characteristics are outlined, along with all aspects of data sources, data collection, and transcription procedures. The development of the data coding scheme is followed by a detailed account of the study's qualitative data analysis process that worked from emerging patterns in interview responses to develop topical themes and broader theory-based categories that would be used for classifying, presenting and discussing findings. Finally, relevant aspects of the study's trustworthiness are addressed.

## Chapter 4: Findings

### 4.1 Overview

In this chapter, findings are presented by research question with their associated analytic constructs and themes as set out in Figure 3.8. The constructs were principally drawn from Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner's theories, as well as interpretive-critical analyses of cultural and linguistic diversity by researchers such as Yosso, Moll, and Cummins, and conceptually matched to thematic patterns coded in the data. The various scholarly background sources are drawn upon more fully in the final summary and discussion chapter rather than in the presentation of the findings of my analysis so that the voices of the participants are foregrounded.

The first section includes descriptions of participants' beliefs about supporting the strengths and resources of young CALD children and their families. In the second section, I describe how participants attribute roles and responsibilities for supporting children's development and successful transition to school. The chapter concludes with an analysis of participants' beliefs about the practices that support CALD families with their children's transition to school. An analysis of how sociocultural contexts interact with the themes is interwoven throughout the chapter.

The aggregated participant responses (termed "beliefs" in Figure 3.2) form this study's descriptive units of analysis. Nonetheless, I have used individual participant voices (using general descriptions of their roles but not divulging their identities to

protect confidentiality) wherever pertinent and possible in an attempt to not only describe explicitly the underlying data points used as evidence for findings, but also to remain close to the sources and thereby provide fuller context for the reader.

## 4.2 Research Question One

In the first research question, the beliefs that families, community stakeholders, and school personnel hold about supporting the strengths and resources of young CALD children and their families are explored. A review of the thematic content of responses to interview questions identified two clusters of meaning (termed Themes in the inductive analytic scheme set out in 3.9.2), as follows:

- Theme: *Engaging with culture*, and
- Theme: *Maintaining home language*.

The constructs from the analysis shown in Figure 3.8 that best characterized these two thematic or meaning clusters were as follows

- Construct 1: Negotiating Cultural Identity and
- Construct 2: Opportunities to Access Capital.

Both constructs were drawn inductively from the concepts employed by Bourdieu's theories of habitus and capital and Cummins and Trueba's discussions of power relations and identity. These constructs could, because of their conceptual content, also assist me in identifying some tentative answers to Research Question One and were consequently refined and relabelled in the course of the analysis until I obtained a

satisfactory conceptual mapping of the two constructs onto the theoretical sources, the research questions and objectives, and the thematic clusters categorized from the responses in the initial, inductive coding.

#### **4.2.1 Construct 1: Negotiating Cultural Identity**

The importance to participants of negotiating cultural identity primarily emerged from the themes coded as *Engaging with culture* and *Maintaining home language*. Participants from each of the groups not only identified language and culture as resources for individuals to engage with their own cultural groups but also with other cultural groups as well. Both a family and school participant referred to culture as “your root” arguing that it was necessary in forming a sense of identity: “We all come from somewhere and if we don’t know that place, how do we form identity? How do we know who we are in the bigger world?”

##### **4.2.1.1 Theme: Engaging with culture.**

Culture reinforced a sense of belonging and was important in maintaining ties with relatives and their home countries (Yosso, 2005). In the examples below, participants from each of the groups comment on identifying with one’s home culture and how that not only helps support a sense of belonging but allows a child to develop a sense of self-worth and pride in their heritage:

Some of the traditions that they engage in with their extended family, right, which help build that child’s sense of their culture and where they come from and what’s important to their family.... I always encourage them to hold onto their home

language and I think that is really important for you know, the strengths of their family and the child's identity and the family's identity. (teacher)

They need to learn about their home culture as their family identifies the home culture because the family might be a combination of different ethnicities, different races, and their culture is whatever's in that house, whatever they create in that house for them. (public health nurse)

Like for my child, she have two, Canadian and Filipina, because that's their root, right, and it's very important. Wherever you go, you have something to be able to share with people on the other side of the world. This is their culture, and you have to be proud of your culture. I think it's important and I think that's how each child learn where they came from. (parent)

Several family participants remarked on how an awareness of cultural differences, particularly between their home culture and Western culture, was important for their children to learn "because each culture has something to add to the bigger culture we have here in Canada." In addition, a parent stressed that having multiple cultures opened up possibilities for a broader perspective – "it's not just trapped in a little small bottle and not seeing what's going on outside in the world."

#### **4.2.1.2 Theme: Maintaining home language.**

Participants, regardless of group, stressed the importance of maintaining one's home language as a means of retaining their identity in the sense discussed best by Cummins (2001c; Cummins et al., 2005) and Trueba (2002). The opportunity to maintain ties with relatives both here and back home was frequently cited as a reason. One teacher expressed regrets about not having the opportunity to connect with her parents' home country and language:

I'm first-generation, so you know, I still hear my parents speaking a second language. I never went back with my parents so I did have a disconnect there so it would have been nice to maybe, go back and hear it more. I think I'd be more connected but that's how you grow up in a family ...

A community member who had immigrated with her family many years ago also expressed regrets about not maintaining her first language with her children:

If I could do anything right that I've done wrong with my own children, I would teach them my first language, and that's the first thing I'll do with my grandchildren, is making sure that they know their first language because that's the basis that they communicate with the older generations.

In the following example, a parent recounted a friend's experience growing up who had temporarily lost fluency in his home language:

It also depends on the group of friends they hang out with. Because I know friends that they at the beginning, they don't speak Chinese because when they grew up in a small town, they all speak [English], but then the parents maintain at home, keep on talking, speaking in Chinese. But then, after they move out with us, hang out with our groups, and we start talking Chinese and he understand, he kind of like half half, and then slowly he start to pick up; now he speak fluent Chinese and he's fluent in English and other languages. And he's like "hmm, kinda weird, I thought I'd never learn."

It appears here that the child and family had grown apart in their cultural and linguistic identities. However, by tapping the resources of his peer group, the child was able to reconnect to his home language and culture and take some pride in his identity as a Chinese speaker.

Being multilingual was generally viewed as a strength that contributed to cultural identity and to connecting with others. A kindergarten teacher remarks that

while CALD children's linguistic competence varies, they all experience some success in school, particularly when parents are involved:

I think a lot of them do really well.... One little girl in my class this year speaks three languages fluently and she's like a high flyer, and she's doing all sorts of things outside of school and her parents are very involved and supportive of and loving in those kinds of things. And then I have another little girl who came with not a word of English and she can understand most of the content of what's going on now even if she can't communicate verbally about it, you know, extensively but I can tell how much she's understanding already.

A community participant described how speaking multiple languages allows people to 'bring out part of that culture with them' resulting in being more flexible and having a broader outlook:

I think that linguistically diverse children and families ... just have a broader reach and I think they're able to bring those differing perspectives into all of their relationships and all of the things that they contribute to write, or in the support that they give to people. So, I just think they're much more flexible people, often, and that they have a broader reach.

As illustrated in the examples above, the social contextual factor of families engaging with their children is interwoven throughout the themes of *Engaging with culture* and *Maintaining home language*, particularly in maintaining ties with extended family and friends and in helping children to learn their home language but also in contributing to children's success in school and more broadly in all their relationships.

The two contexts of community and school and their interrelationships, while less frequently mentioned in responses falling under the construct of Negotiating Cultural Identity, were nonetheless illustrated by the principal's suggestion that



families need validation of their cultural identity as they integrated into Canadian culture and that the school has a responsibility to provide some of that:

I think we need to encourage parents to do that because a lot of them come thinking “well, I’m in Canada.” Like for me, integration is not about losing your first culture it's about embracing it and seeing how you make all this work. So I think parents, grandparents, but teachers, every teacher, we should be honouring of who our kids are.

#### **4.2.2 Construct 2: Opportunities to Access Capital**

Many of the responses coded under the three themes a) *Engaging with culture*, b) *Maintaining home language*, and c) *Social inclusion* were also marked by two attributes coded *barriers* or *facilitators* in the theme *Accessing capital*. Drawing on both Bourdieu’s claim that children whose habitus and capital more closely resembled that of the school would be more successful in accumulating additional capital and Yosso’s theory of community cultural wealth which treats culture as a resource, the second construct, Opportunities to Access Capital was used to frame the findings. The content of responses clustered initially into the first two themes not only aligned with the concepts contained in the broader category termed Negotiating Cultural Identity (Construct 1 reported in Section 4.2.1) but also with the conceptual content of the broader category termed Opportunities to Access Capital (Construct 2) and hence are logically categorized within both constructs as shown in Figure 3.4.

#### 4.2.2.1 Theme: Engaging with culture.

All three groups of participants offered responses identified with the theme *Engaging with culture*, and one or more of its subthemes, *diversity*, *group identity and belonging*, and *intercultural relationships*, while identifying these both as what were coded as *facilitators* or *barriers to accessing capital*.

The community strategist referred to the assumptions that school and community staff make about the strengths of diversity and the belief that it ‘just happens’ in contrast to the view that for children, more intentional efforts by the school and community need to be made in order to capitalize on the strengths of diversity:

And it’s very interesting, because in a recent sort of conversation that we had with some young people in the community and the school about how much diversity comes together in your school, right, on the playground, in activities, and that kind of stuff. And from the children’s perspective, it could be better. From the teachers’ perspective or from principals’, they just, you know, and I’ve heard this comment, I’ve heard it from our own staff, “well you just have to look around, we’ve got diversity and it just happens naturally.” Well, it doesn’t happen naturally.

It appears that diversity can be viewed as a facilitator only to the extent that school and community are prepared to incorporate its strengths intentionally into their practices.

A second subtheme discovered under the theme of *Engaging with culture* where participants noted both barriers and facilitators was *group identity and belonging*. Even within a family, different beliefs about engaging with culture prevail.

In the following example, one parent expresses the belief that it is important for parents to share their cultural heritage with their children.

You know, if it's important to the parent then it should be, it will be important to child. Like P, born and raised in Fiji, you know he was born and raised in Fiji, so his culture and his background is very important to him but he's not putting that importance on the children.

However, the other parent described the difficulties of trying to engage with one's home culture when that diaspora is very small: "Fijian community, there's not much in here. It's very small community." Culture is not a simple matter of intergenerational transmission.

The third related subtheme, *intercultural relationships*, was more often viewed as a *facilitator* to *accessing capital*. However, there were several instances where participants viewed cultural or linguistic differences as barriers to intercultural exchange. A parent reported:

Sometimes even there are Filipinos, is hard to get along with. Because sometimes they look at you, mostly like, if I go to school, I have my hijab, so it's like okay! Like everybody's like, like sometimes like some parents, like when we go to playground, they go it's like "oh, it's hot, it's hot already and then, where's your hood?" It's like they are insulting the hijab thing.

One contentious area of engaging with culture emerged regarding the topic of differences in cultural traditions about food and expectations at school, specifically managing lunch time routines, reflecting a mismatch between family and school habitus. When the rules of the field (of school) are incompatible or at least disharmonious to family habitus, a struggle for power can ensue (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Families who are not familiar with the rules and routines of the institution of school (i.e. field), act according to the ones they are familiar with. The

school on the other hand, has the expectation its norms will be followed, socializing students and their families into the culture of the dominant group (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). A Strong Start facilitator, despite being aware of cultural differences around meal preparation, argued that CALD parents should adapt to the school's expectations concerning limiting the amount of time to consume lunch:

There's a lot of them that will come back here and start spoon feeding at lunch, so I tell them you know it's really important for your child to have some independence, so make lunches that are easy for them to eat and easy for them. ...but a lot of them want them to have hot. It's a cultural thing, they want them to have the hot – rice and soups – so they'll come and do the spoon feeding. And I go "you're not helping your children when you do that because when they go into the classroom and that expectation is expected from the teacher", they're not going to get it. It's just not going to happen so you're going to have to have some kind of expectation that they have to be independent in certain areas and follow-through at home or it's not going to translate back and forth.

In contrast, a multicultural liaison worker explained that the cultural tradition of a hot lunch is difficult for families to relinquish. She also asserted that a lack of understanding of these differences in cultural practices or perhaps even an unwillingness to understand is one of the biggest issues that needs to be addressed:

But also, in terms of feeding, it's a big issue. Like we eat rice and you know like food that they're are good only when it's fresh or it's like it's just been cooked. So I think that's the reason why parents go and feed their kids. And then I know that the school will say "well, let him have a sandwich or something's that's easy" but that's not what we eat. I think it's easily the biggest problem to in terms of – but I think the kids eventually they learn to like Western food compared to ours. But I think that is the reason too- it's like it's hard to let go.

It appears that the school may not be acknowledging cultural practices outside of the mainstream as valid sources of familial capital.

The school principal also confirmed that the practice of parents or grandparents dropping off a hot lunch is a way of connecting with their children while the school often views the issue of feeding children as overprotection:

I see a strong, strong connection in the moms who show up to watch their kids eat lunch because we don't let them in, right? Because they just dropped off this hot lunch, I mean how cool is that? I don't want those families to think 'well, what you're doing is wrong. We just want the kids to eat cold food and be in a really noisy' --like, who are we to think that we've got the corner on the way to be? And that is where it is so different because we have probably five or six from what I can see, sort of distinct ethnocultural groups and different ways of those families connecting with their kids.... So that's what's why it's important to ask questions and why I really want to connect with those different parent groups to see how we can work as partners.

The principal further observed that it was important for schools not to make faulty assumptions about diverse cultural practices but rather to seek information in order to build positive relationships with parents.

#### **4.2.2.2 Theme: Maintaining home language.**

In the present analysis, responses coded under the thematic category *Maintaining home language* and its corollary, *multilingualism*, were sometimes viewed as a *barriers* in *Accessing capital*, particularly by some school personnel, in learning English or accessing school support. Here a speech-language pathologist ponders the benefits of bilingualism and the relevance of years of research on that topic:

And it is a challenge right now. It's not a benefit because we don't know. We don't know enough, we don't have the data to say "okay, well you're enough" – and then to think that kids who are truly bilingual, it's supposed to be an advantage. So, the research I do here, I can't even include bilinguals because it might be an advantage.

But then at the school board, so there's both sides. Is it an advantage or a disadvantage in terms of language abilities?

The speech-language pathologist goes on to speculate whether children are receiving mixed messages about being bilingual – that maintaining one's first language is not enough; English has to be acquired as well:

I wonder too, whether the children get that message in the cases where we have a family where the parents haven't learned English. Is that message really coming to the kids, that it's really important; it's so beneficial to speak more than one language, when the parents themselves haven't taken the time or made it a priority to learn English. You're not really showing your kid that importance if that's not happening in the home.

Some gave high value to children learning English early in order to ultimately succeed at school. A neighbourhood house staff member commented, "So early, you know early is better to learn English or French, and if that happens, and then they'll generally do quite well in school." Several participants raised concerns that a lack of English skills could result in missed opportunities for both children and families as is illustrated in the following examples. An administrative assistant believed that parents had a responsibility to prioritize their children learning English:

I think they have to work more with them, like getting them to school, and instead of putting them into classes for their language, putting them into English classes.

The speech and language pathologist commented on the lost opportunities for a child to participate in community activities because of the parent's lack of confidence in her English skills:

This little guy I just tested last year, he just loved soccer, just loved it, but wasn't in organized soccer because mom didn't feel comfortable with her English skills of going out there and figuring out where the child, where it would be appropriate for him to play soccer.

A kindergarten teacher observed that speaking English is seen as necessary condition to intercultural communication and without it, interaction with others who speak a different language is difficult, leaving children and families disconnected from meaningful relationships. Like the administrative assistant above, the teacher appears to be imposing school habitus in the form of the sanctioned language of instruction with no possibility of translanguaging (O. García et al., 2011) foreseen here :

I think that's one we're constantly going to struggle with and that's when I look outside, the parents that I see that are talking to each other either have English and are communicating in English. So if you've got the English then you can communicate better but if you don't, I find they're not out there quickly; they're quickly gone and they're home and the kids are back on their computers.

From Bourdieusian and community cultural wealth perspectives, these three school participants appear to be promoting a monolingual approach privileging the mainstream language, and consequently devaluing the linguistic capital of CALD children and families.

On the other hand, several school participants noted that the emphasis on the importance of learning English often was to the detriment of maintaining the home language. A Grade 1 teacher expressed concern that some children are at risk of losing general language competence because of parental beliefs that learning English takes priority over home language acquisition:

I think often people who come here speaking another language think their child's better off not learning the other language because the kid would get it mixed up with English or whatever, so they don't put the time into teaching the first language but they're also not able to teach the second language so we have kids who come with very little language at all.

Amongst the family participants, however, only those families who spoke English as one of their home languages remarked on its importance for children to learn eventually.

While all participants expressed support for maintaining home languages to some degree (see Section 4.2.1), potential obstacles that CALD children encountered were raised. The multicultural liaison workers raised the issue of the difficulty for some children of maintaining their home language when it conflicted with the norms of school or the child's L2 competence as one of them explained below:

If the kids' themselves, language, the other school language development is not that strong, and organizational skills, and so forth, and so the management of time to be able to continue both Chinese school and English work, sometimes they might be conflicts and becomes some negative issues there.

In contrast, a community strategist commented on how language barriers could be overcome by looking at the assets that exist within the families and within the community echoing Yosso's and Moll's proposals in this respect:

And you know I hear a lot of commented about "well, you know, the parents don't speak English, so we really can't get them to help" right, and that's not been our experience in community. In fact, people have found ways to get over the language barrier in order to be able to bring their gifts forward and we have an incredible number of gifted people in our community but because we don't share the same language, we somehow think of them as being deficient, right?



#### 4.2.2.3 Theme: Social inclusion.

Families reported encountering *barriers in accessing capital* because of the third theme, *Social inclusion*, mentioning issues such as work flexibility, time, comfort level, family or friends' support, and cultural, economic, and linguistic obstacles. As noted by Bourdieu and Passeron (1990), individuals can experience social exclusion for several reasons, including a lack of ease in specific social settings and a lack of familiarity with their cultural norms so consequently adjust their aspirations to their perceived chances of success (cf. Yosso's idea of aspirational capital where individuals maintain high aspirations despite barriers).

One parent reported the difficulties of negotiating family-unfriendly work expectations and child care:

...they told a lady, she's a single mom, I felt bad for her, she worked there for five years and she was hard-working and everything, and just because her husband left her and she had to take care of her children, they said "too bad, if you can't handle the job then quit." So employers make a big different impact in life with the family.

Several of the family participants offered the suggestion that if more flexibility in work schedules was provided by employers, parents could participate more in activities, including parent-teacher meetings, held during the school day. School participants, too, mentioned the difficulty of arranging extra-curricular activities to support families because of time constraints. The onus fell upon the principal to represent the school at evening events such as PAC meetings or movie nights. The multicultural liaison workers noted that while they had more flexibility in their schedules to meet with

parents, they were overburdened with heavy caseloads and could not meet as often or with as many families as they would like in order to provide the kinds of support needed.

The importance of maintaining a home language in negotiating cultural identity was outlined in 4.2.1 above. On the other hand, here, a parent reflects on the inevitability of home language loss as the child enters school and tries to fit in:

I think she's going to forget Punjabi as soon as she can go to do the (school). She's now, just four-year-old, right? And since she start speaking English, she keeps stop from saying anything from my own language. It looks hard to her in Punjabi and then easy in English, she said.

The parent is faced with a conflict of wanting their child to succeed at school by acquiring the school-sanctioned linguistic capital (English) at the expense of losing their home language, an alternative, but nonetheless less valued, source of linguistic capital.

In addition, families reported experiencing barriers in *accessing* services such as child care and community programs that provided opportunities to build social capital.

The obstacles in arranging for childcare around work demands is evident in this parent's comments:

Childcare--that's pretty hard for me. I had to find a job like it start before school and then after school. Like for Tuesday, I gonna have a problem, because I have to start at eight, and she have to start at nine, so I don't know where I'm going to leave her.

In a similar case, another parent observed that in addition to scheduling around work, families with younger children also are faced with the challenge of organizing

alternative childcare arrangements in order to attend community programs like Strong Start with their pre-kindergarten aged child:

First one is the child care, especially if you have babies, and you're going to have the babies here. That's number one, I guess. Second is both parents are working, so I would say the scheduling; it's really tough. But the good thing, though, I mean, either one of the parents, is afford to go, and not just both ones. So, child care. I hope if they have that, there's like a sort of, you know even just for half, they charge a childcare fee where they can leave, and the parents can –because I notice two babies and then one child here, and it's kind of hard for the other moms.

Addressing childcare at a policy level, the director of child and family development services outlined the financial and availability barriers that families face:

And unfortunately, the early care and learning, the childcare piece that exists in Vancouver as well as everywhere else around the province, is too expensive for many families to access. There aren't enough spaces and there aren't enough quality spaces, and the ones that we do have are out of reach financially for people, so that's a real drawback.

By comparison, with exception of the child and family services director, the school and community participants tended to focus more on the *availability* and wide range of programs and services as facilitators to accessing capital without really recognizing the barriers families faced in accessing those services. For example, this multicultural liaison worker outlined the variety of programs and services available to families which served as good connectors for schools and community services:

So, some of the established programs, for example, we were saying in the kindergarten orientation, Ready Set Learn, sometimes they might bring Mother Goose in, those are collaboration. Strong Start, is provincial plus school. Yeah, they are room for continuing of those, for example, [...] Neighbourhood House, [...] Community Centre, in this area, pretty active in a sense that they try to, –since last

year, we have our community team worker, our coordinator, also calling for a meeting for the whole area, all the youth providers in the high school.

In the excerpt below, a school librarian talks about a book program available to all kindergarten students in the district which can serve as a facilitator for literacy development for some children:

Those kinds of initiatives where everybody gets a book, is fantastic, because nobody's getting singled out like "oh, you're the poor kid, so here's a book for you." Everybody gets one so that's great and if you've already got 200 books at home, maybe doesn't help you that much but whatever, it just reinforces the whole idea that you hopefully are reading and enjoying it.

Despite these barriers, however, the strengths and resources that families possess that can both help build and access capital is illustrated in the broad context of families engaging with their children, the community, and the school. Here, a public librarian talks about the importance of maintaining the home language in order to access various kinds of capital – linguistic, cultural, and social:

Our stance at the library is that it's really important for kids to have that tool and to have fluency in their parents' first language for a bunch of reasons, both linguistic and cultural. Yeah, it helps connect them to their home culture, to their extended family; they develop fluency and understanding of vocabulary and understanding of concepts that they can transfer to English when they learn English in school and in other settings; and it strengthens their relationship between the parent and the child.

However, *barriers in accessing capital* were often perceived by participants to interact with the theme of *Social inclusion*, particularly around families' comfort level in participating in school and community activities. In this next example, a multicultural liaison worker discussed how families sometimes did not recognize the capital they

possessed because they were focussed on providing basic needs to their families. This in turn could limit their opportunities to share what they knew and to access other resources or experiences that could have contributed to their children's educational success:

...sometimes they [families] don't see themselves as the resource, and it's more of the physical, helping bringing to school, the cooking, making sure they're wearing warm, those kinds of things – earning money to put them to this program, that program, making sure a tutor, or sitting down, they do sometimes sit down and ask them review or whatever but didn't see their own sharing and their own knowledge, ... enlivening all these type of resources. So if they see themselves, the messages of that actually helps, they have to believe that. Sometimes they don't believe as much as-- because it's a practice.

#### **4.2.3 Summary of Findings for Research Question One**

In exploring participants' beliefs about the strengths and resources of CALD children and families, Negotiating Cultural Identity and Opportunities to Access Capital were used as constructs to organize the participants' responses. The themes that emerged from the data analysis of cultural practices such as *Engaging with culture* and *Maintaining home language* were categorized and presented under the first organizing construct, *Negotiating Cultural Identity*, which resonates with Bourdieu's notions of habitus and capital and Cummins and Trueba's explanations of how these are reflected in the challenges of developing identity and capital. The findings suggest that acknowledging CALD children and their families' home language and culture as strengths and potential resources fosters a sense of belonging and is important in maintaining ties with their relatives and home countries.

Three themes in the interview responses of *Engaging with culture*, *Maintaining home language*, and *Social inclusion* were also categorized and presented under a second organizing construct, *Opportunities to Access Capital*. Responses categorized into the themes that fell under this construct were also cross-categorized in the form of *barriers* and *facilitators*. The interrelated subthemes *diversity*, *group identity and belonging*, *intercultural relationships*, and *multilingualism* were seen both as *facilitators* and *barriers* to *accessing capital* for all three groups of participants.

Findings also provided insight into how the contexts of Family, School, and Community intersected with the themes of a) *Engaging with culture*, b) *Maintaining home language*, and c) *Social inclusion*. Widely varying views arose between school and community participants about school lunchtime practices. In addition, lack of recognition of family resources not only by the school and the community but by the families themselves was identified in the responses as a *barrier to accessing capital*.

#### **4.3 Research Question Two**

The second research question asked about the roles and responsibilities of stakeholders in preparing CALD children for their transition to school. Participants' responses to questions about children's development, and supporting school transition were examined. The three themes used to organize the responses were as follows:

- Theme: *Helping children develop*,
- Theme: *Helping children learn language and culture*, and

- Theme: *Supporting school transition*.

The third analytic construct was entitled Roles and Responsibilities in Supporting CALD Children. Its principal scholarly sources were Bourdieu's concept of habitus as it relates to beliefs of how children develop and Bronfenbrenner's theory regarding the connections and interactions between the child's microsystems of family, school, and community (or what Bourdieu calls fields) that support development. In addition, the research on children's transition to school and contributions of families to school transition informed this construct.

In attributing roles and responsibilities, participants' responses addressed the interrelationships between *what* individuals are expected to do in helping children with their development and school transition and *who* was primarily responsible for carrying out those tasks in the different contexts of home, school, and community. Reflecting the dual content of this particular research question and the analytic construct underpinning it, findings are presented in two parts. Expectations pertaining to specific responsibilities (the *what* question) are described by means of a thematic analysis, while expectations about actors/roles judged responsible (the *who* question) are presented by looking at the contexts or microsystems individually and the interactions between them (the mesosystems) by means of a contextual analysis of the content of the interviews.

### **4.3.1 Construct 3: Thematic Analysis of Responsibilities**

In exploring participants' beliefs about how to help children develop, I found different expectations amongst participants about which developmental milestones were important for children to acquire before starting school, learning language and culture, and how families, schools, and community members can support young children's development and learning. These were reflected in the following themes arising from patterns found in the coded responses.

#### **4.3.1.1 Theme: Helping children develop.**

Participants suggested that helping children learn academic, self-help, and socio-emotional skills, in addition to promoting physical and language development, all assist children in "getting a good start" for transition to school. All participants expected that children should have mastered at least some self-care skills by the time they enter kindergarten including dressing, eating, and toileting. However, there were differences amongst the participants regarding the level of independence expected. One parent expressed her concern that even if the child has developed some awareness of social etiquette, it is important for adults to be aware that this is still developing and not to expect complete mastery.

I mean sometimes, the children even know this rule but I mean they cannot help doing this. Like they know they should be quiet on the table but sometimes they are like talking, and they like the food so they eat very mess. I mean, ... the children are still very little person.



In the example below, a parent talked about how mastering self-help skills helps a child learn to function independently in kindergarten:

We always tell him, you know “to wipe your bum good because in kindergarten they’re not going to be there to help you. And okay, you take your lunch bag, you hold it yourself because in kindergarten you have to do that yourself.”

Yet others from the school and community contexts expressed their beliefs that diverse cultural expectations often resulted in children coming to school with a limited level of independence, attributing a lack of understanding on the parents’ part of what is important in the child’s development (according to mainstream values) like the teacher who attributed children’s limited self-help skills and independence to caregivers’ lack of knowledge:

That’s a cultural thing, cultural. Some cultures view it as a process that is essential early on, that they learn responsibility for themselves and then other cultures feel that they need to be attended to even later on, even past school-age so that they come without knowing how to put their shoes on. Because often as we use the word ‘indulged’, I don’t think it’s indulged, I think it’s just a lack of knowledge on the caregiver’s part that this is an important step that they need to learn to be released, independent.

Or the public health nurse who observed that CALD parents had few expectations for their children before starting school:

I have not come across parents having any major expectations on their children before they start school. I think parents don’t really have a grasp of what they should expect of their children before they start school.

These two examples align with deficit perspectives regarding cultural beliefs and practices in their failure to acknowledge parental values, knowledge, and attitudes (habitus).

In contrast, two family participants stressed the importance of teaching their children how to become self-sufficient and self-regulated before they start school because they believed teachers could not be expected to teach every child those skills:

He have to know these things because the teacher cannot take care of— only one child at home. I mean at home before kindergarten, the parents can involve a lot of taking care of you for this issue sometimes. I mean because children are very slow, so sometimes I can help him because - because he is very slow. I can help him to (be) fast.... but with his school nobody can help him, only himself.

That's what I think the parents, that's why the parents, important before they start school, because a parent cannot just totally rely on school because school teachers can't do much. At home, some kids they start kindergarten, some start preschool, so discipline, if you want in school, you have to sit still, pay attention, no goofing around or playing around – this is what you have to do, discipline I want to see.

These parents' expectations regarding their responsibilities sharply contrast with the public health nurse's perception cited earlier that "parents don't really have a grasp of what they should expect of their children before they start school."

Participants from all three groups talked about how having some exposure to pre-literacy skills is helpful. Family and community participants suggested that familiarity with numbers and letters was sufficient:

Because I think preparing him, he has been going to preschool so they know how to write his name and know all his words (letters) and readings. (Family member)

So, I don't think that we want to need children to be little Einsteins when they start kindergarten but exposing children to things like their numbers and their letters so they know their telephone number by the time they start school, so that they understand some of the letters that are in their name (Community stakeholder)

School participants' expectations for children's preparedness for starting kindergarten, however, were often more extensive, more aligned with a school-based/educationally focussed habitus when compared to those from the other two groups. In the examples below, a kindergarten teacher and an area counsellor observed that a good grasp of school readiness skills and dispositions would be a minimum expectation:

You know if they were, academically, like just to have knowledge of the alphabet, knowledge of books, a love of books, a love of reading, some general concept of alphabet even if they can't name the letters because you know, they're young or whatever - you know some exposure to alphabet letters, you know as a minimum. Some counting is good even if it's up to five or 10. It's amazing the ones that can even recognize the numbers to 10. (Kindergarten teacher)

School readiness — being ready to be in a group of other children, learning how to sit in a circle or sit on a carpet, listen to a lesson, listen to a story, pre-writing, pre-literacy, pre-numeracy, skills, sharing, all of those social skills, self-regulation. (area counsellor)

Some parents also believed that it was important for children to acquire some academic skills before starting school to help the teacher by adjusting the child's habitus to meet the expectations of the school. By lessening the burden for the teacher, this would in turn enable their child to progress more quickly and develop their capital. A parent observed that what was previously the school's responsibility now fell to the family:

ABC, I think they should; numbers, yes. If the kids know that then it's much easier for the teacher in school and they will learn faster. Because the world nowadays, everything go so fast. It's not like back then, "it's okay, you don't need to know, that's the school job." Now it's no longer the case.

The parent's expectations and practices can be seen as an effort to align their habitus with the school field which they can then use in the process of developing their children's habitus to acquire the kinds of educational capital recognized by the school.

Some teachers, like the Kindergarten teacher above, affirmed that some pre-literacy and mathematics knowledge was helpful for children to have when they started Kindergarten. Others, like the Grade 1 teacher, wondered whether young children would be better served by lowering expectations for acquiring academic skills and focussing more on play and social interaction skills, including communication.

There's a lot of pressure to have them reading by the end of kindergarten and they're doing real math by the end of kindergarten and stuff like that. So I think we're pushing the academics really fast and hard these days and I really think we would be better off backing off and just having play and social skills and turn taking and how to talk and all that kind of stuff.

Helping children to develop socially was considered essential for children to be successful at school by all of the participants. Topics that participants raised included manners, respect, conflict resolution, social relationships, self-confidence, independence, motivation to learn, self-regulation, listening and following directions, health and safety, and values. A neighbourhood house staff member discussed how learning to develop social relationships is considered a basic skill by school and

community stakeholders alike. She believed that kindergarten teachers expected children to have developed their social competence rather than academic skills:

When we talk to kindergarten teachers about what they expect of the children that are coming in, they tell us that primarily, they want to see the basic skills for the children. So that would be sharing, collaboration with peers, you know interactions with adults. They want to see the basics; they don't need kids coming in knowing the alphabet and everything like that. It is just the basics and we believe that you know, having a group setting does allow for that before they go to school.

A kindergarten teacher also commented that it is important that children learn to become independent and self-confident, together with a motivation to learn:

If I look at it in terms of the most important thing that I want my students to have when they finish the end of the year, it would be that they, I guess, enjoy coming to school, that they have a little bit of a sense of independence and confidence that, "okay, I'm going to come here to learn and yes I can do it."

Nevertheless, several of the school participants prioritized learning school readiness skills along with social skills associated with the conventions of the classroom.

Families stressed that one of the most important social skills for their children to learn was manners and that both families and school can assist with that:

Yeah, this is very important. But sometimes you repeat this manners to him and the whole time you repeat and repeat. I mean before the kindergarten, the parents will repeat this to them. If the children are not in the group, they cannot know the importance of those manners until they are in the group.

Beliefs for the kinds of skills children need to develop as they start school were relatively consistent across all three groups of participants regarding self-care, socialization, and school readiness. However, some school and community participants may not have held accurate beliefs about parental expectations for their children at

school entry. Clearly there are different expectations both across and within the fields or microsystems of home, school, and community.

#### **4.3.1.2 Theme: Helping children learn language and culture.**

All of the participants talked about the importance of engaging with the child around their language and culture whether it be through conversation, reading books, playing together, sharing family stories, or exposure to different languages and cultures, including food.

Providing opportunities for intercultural development and exchange, including learning about and sharing one another's cultures, was frequently discussed as a means of supporting linguistic and cultural development. Community participants, in particular, stressed the importance of recognizing and celebrating cultural diversity in order to make people feel included. Below, a community strategist talks about how activities such as sharing food at community events allows CALD families not only to share their culture but to honour it as well which leads to more opportunities to participate in the community.

I think being able to give people opportunities to share their stories about their culture, to share some aspects of their culture, to be curious about it. ... one of the women was talking about the importance of —she was the child of an immigrant — and you know she said one of the things that was so important to them was they were be able to bring their food to like a potluck or something — people started to inquire about it they started to honour, you know they started to enjoy it, they started to participate in it, there started to be stories about recipes and things like that...there was some honouring, is was “this was something I was proud to bring, something I was proud to have others understand it”.

Another neighbourhood house staff member suggested that more creative and flexible approaches to supporting and honouring the diversity of languages in the community in various programs are needed by using the resources available in the community:

I think being able to offer opportunities for home languages is to number one be spoken, to be shared, to be part of curriculums. ...we had a fellow who did some instruction here with soccer and he didn't speak English, he ran his whole program in Spanish and so the people who enrolled their children in the program not only got to do soccer, they also got to learn Spanish.

School participants, too, pointed out the importance of sharing families' cultures. However, the area counsellor observed that there may be cultural clashes, particularly with the dominant school culture, that are not easily resolved with the paucity of resources available.

I think it's important for families to share their cultural stories, their nursery rhymes, and their fairy tales and for children to hear the oral development of language in whatever culture their family is from. And that the archetypes within the family or within the culture are shared with young children in terms of values of, we might call them virtues of character, —honesty, telling the truth, sharing, getting along, that everyone in the family contributes to family life, everyone has a place and a role.

The provision of parent-child programs and services was highlighted by participants as a resource that families eagerly took advantage of for supporting learning both home languages and English. As noted by a family services coordinator, not only were families appreciative of the resources but school personnel too. The coordinator recognized the benefits that children had accrued from their participation.

They've been coming to me since infancy in our program and I see the language ability, the ability to say their names, recognize their colours, the numbers, the

confidence. I mean parents are coming back with the same children who haven't been to a preschool, have come back to me and said they did really well in their interviews and the teachers were very impressed with their skills and knowledge.

#### **4.3.1.3 Theme: Supporting school transition.**

Involvement in family, school, and community contexts was considered an important element in supporting children's development in preparing them for a positive start to their school journey by all three groups but in different ways. A teacher commented that CALD parents' prioritizing learning math skills at home provided support for their children's learning math at school. The teacher also reported that community resources such as the library provide support for reading in the family's home language(s):

I find with the ESL parents, I find they're really keen on the math skills so they're helping a lot in that area. Reading is a big one, so going home and actually reading every day and talking about the books. If they don't speak English I find, I think the library resources are great right now. They've actually started developing books with—that are actually in their language.

By comparison, several parents viewed opportunities to socialize outside of the family context a priority in helping children get ready to learn. One parent offered the rationale that academic skills and school-related social skills would be taught at school:

I think important is outdoor – we socialize with everything surrounding with him so he can learn a lot. And in the school they going to teach him how to read, how to learn, and the good manners, and the dos and the don'ts.

In helping children transition to school, school and community participants discussed the need to provide a welcoming environment for both children and their



families. In addition, opportunities for families to share their cultural resources were considered as important as providing resources to support families. A teacher suggested that the school needed to reach out to families and the community, particularly, if the latter has not taken the initiative to contact the school:

I think the school's responsibility is that if we have an open environment, they will come to us. If they're not coming to us, if perchance there is a change in staff then we need to go to them and say this is what we would really like you to [let us know].

A multicultural liaison worker commented that the school and community need to be ready to respond to families' initial efforts to meet with school personnel and that a continuity of services is essential.

Families will try to find time early on for some meetings, so we have to start and try to take advantage of those precious time to communicate and to gather resources so the parent or the family can take as much as possible. That's why the continuing of the community, the school service, supporting the staff, and all these, so it's also available outside, then it will be helping to support the family.

In contrast, a neighbourhood house staff member suggested that rather than focussing on institutional resources, more informal resources in the neighbourhood and community should be accessed.

I think we have huge emphasis on professional and service development and delivery as being sort of almost the higher priority to be able to support children in their development and I'd like to see a stronger emphasis on what neighbours can do, what community can do.

Family participants considered it was also their responsibility to prepare their child for school and to communicate and work with the teacher as this parent outlined below.

But the first thing is the parents should cooperate with the teacher, like the triangle, make him can enjoy his school life, but then follow the teacher's homework, sometimes the reading. But other times, I think it is important for him to take part in more activities.

Another parent described how they included siblings not only to explain what to expect in kindergarten but also to serve as a role model:

We talk about it, what to expect from school; and what you learn; and what we expect you to do, especially listen to the teachers; during recess or lunch, what you should do before you eat your lunch; listen, of course, listen to the teachers; follow the rules like this is what big boy do. That sort of stuff to talk about what kindergarten life is like, and then getting other kids involved, like the sister, like "look, the sister is doing this" and then they have certain ideas what to expect.

#### **4.3.2 Construct 3: Contextual Analysis of Roles**

As noted above in 4.3, participants were equally forthcoming in attributing whose *role* the responsibilities are attached to in helping children develop, learn language and culture, and transition to school. Adapting Trueba's notion of social agents operating in the fields or contexts of family, school, and community participants' beliefs about the roles these educational agents play in children's development and school transition were explored. Thus the role of families in the family context; school personnel in the school context, and community-based stakeholders in the community context. All participants stressed the importance of support from these three contexts in helping children to develop a basic potential for learning that would enable a successful transition to school. There was consensus, for example, that the family should play the

primary role in helping children learn their home language and culture but participants also discussed ways the community and school could offer support.

As will be seen in the following examples, participants also expected responsibilities would be frequently shared across contexts and they often promoted the notion of interactions amongst stakeholders across contexts. Participants often mentioned a primary role alongside supporting roles that could be played by other contexts.

#### **4.3.2.1 The family context.**

There was general agreement that families are assumed to take the principal responsibilities for preparing children for school. The community librarian observed that this expectation was generally met by families:

I mean many parents have gotten, sort of gotten the memo from various community organizations or just from their own instincts that the most important thing for kids to have is, you know, a certain amount of personal self-sufficiency; an ability to sort of sit quietly for a certain amount of time in a group; to socialize; to share; to be able to adjust to a certain amount of social give-and-take; to listen to somebody who's in authority, to some adult.

Participants from all three contexts also talked about the importance of instilling a 'passion for learning' in children and that was the family's responsibility to do so by 'spending time' with their children (notwithstanding the different interpretations of what this entails), teaching values, and providing experiences outside the home.

As for the theme of learning language and culture, school participants in particular expressed hesitation in taking responsibility for teaching (home) languages

and cultures because of a lack of knowledge of other cultures and languages. They tended to relegate that role to families and community members.

A Grade 1 teacher indicated being conflicted about the choice of teaching about the home cultures of her students with limited competence on the one hand, and just ignoring it on the other:

Their parents. Yeah, I mean. I don't see it as a role of the school because unless I'm teaching about a culture I know well, the best I can do is superficial generalizations, right? Which I'm always torn, is it better than nothing, or is nothing better than that? So, that again, I would say it's family and that community.

An area counsellor expressed similar uncertainty:

Ideally, someone who speaks the language. I mean it's pretty risky to ask me to teach French, pretty risky. I don't know that I would take on Cantonese or Mandarin nor do I think it would be proved particularly profitable in an educational setting until I was at a level of competency that things made sense.

Another teacher agreed, but explained that that they utilized the resources of their students and parents to support this undertaking:

I don't think it should be the teacher because I don't think I would have an extensive knowledge of their [culture] - I depend on some of the kids and the parents to come into the classroom and help out with that stuff.

#### **4.3.2.2 The community context.**

Community participants believed that everyone had "a role in helping children develop." In particular, they recognized the role of social contexts other than the family in supporting children's linguistic and cultural development, as discussed by a childcare coordinator below:

It's the family's responsibility but I think that other people, so whether be childcare workers or school teachers or anybody, have a responsibility to have those represented in their groups and make everybody aware of what it means to be a certain culture.

The childcare coordinator from a local neighbourhood house reiterated that it was the responsibility of both community and school stakeholders to develop an awareness of cultural differences and to promote an understanding of those differences.

I think that other people, so whether be childcare workers or school teachers or anybody have a responsibility to have those represented in their groups and make everybody aware of what it means to be a certain culture. We would work a lot with our Asian families who come some quite — you know, I mean to us, it would seem a little strange to be wearing six or seven layers at a time when you come but we understand that that's their thinking and why they do that. So it's making other families aware of that and children aware of that.

A community librarian viewed her role in actively acknowledging the child and family's culture as important for affirming their identity:

Their family, I think, I guess obviously the first people. I think other people from their culture who are around, and I think it's very affirming when other adults in the community, whether or not they're from the child's home culture, affirm it and kind of make reference to it. I mean that's one reason I've learned a couple of story time rhymes and songs in Mandarin and Cantonese and Vietnamese and Spanish. And I know I do them really badly, but I feel like it's really affirming to kids and to the parents to hear that. You know, kids who might have this sort of dichotomy in their mind that you know, "home is where I speak this language but nobody else knows about it. It's like my own thing. I go to the library and everybody's speaking English."

When discussing the need to promote an understanding of cultural differences and an awareness of available community resources to support linguistic diversity, several

community participants remarked that the onus of finding and utilizing those resources in creative ways fell to community stakeholders.

Participants from all three groups discussed the role of the neighbourhood in supporting children's development. One parent suggested that the neighbourhood can help children develop their social skills and provide opportunities to communicate.

Neighbours played a role in supporting children's English language learning according to one teacher:

I'd expect because they're neighbours they would be helping them to speak English because they'd be English-speaking. So with our community that would help our children speak more English.

The family-youth worker commented, however, that sometimes families were not connected with their neighbours and that the role of community schools teams was "to bring in the whole community and make them feel that they can support their kids or the community children." He also reported that faith leaders in the community sometimes played a pivotal role in guiding children and youth in the community.

And you know in conversations I've had with children and youth about who they're connected to in the community and you know their religious leaders come up, not quite a bit but enough that they look to those people to seek guidance or some direction, community members, I just think all these people play a huge role.

The significant role of faith leaders for many families in the community was also noted by several school and community participants. The area counsellor notes:

I would say that in some, for some families, the religious community is the core of their family life, that there are families are very active in the faith community and their minister, priest, rabbi, guru – I can't think of all the particular names of the

different leaders – would hold far more sway than the school and the family would seek direction from that person.

The important role that both volunteers and healthcare professionals in the community played in children's development was underscored by the participants. Below, a neighbourhood house family services coordinator describes how the long term commitment of volunteers provides children the opportunity to develop secure attachments with adults outside of the home.

We never talked about the volunteers, and they play a huge part ... in a child's development because some of the volunteers stick around for 10 years, five years. They become, like we have this older South Asian volunteer who's been with us for seven or eight years, and she's like everybody's auntie, everybody's Oma, whether it's Filipino or Chinese or Spanish, they always meet each other with a hug. So it gives children a sense of security to see those people.

The public health nurse pointed out that the healthcare professionals in the community have an important role in making families aware of community services such as "the well baby clinics and then, by advocating for them to get services."

#### **4.3.2.3 The school context.**

The notion of interaction amongst contexts to support children's transition to school is framed as a kind of three-way exchange between the child, family, and school by one school participant:

It really is that sort of triangle effect that you know, we're all doing is to help your child kind of perform as well as they can at school, but you have a role, I can do this, and this is what your child can do to help himself. And it's that kind of three-way exchange.

A parent echoed this view in that home and school both had roles to play in helping children develop but that more communication was needed:

As a parent you have your role to play too, you got to help your child develop. So I think if teachers would make attempt like maybe have time with parents, and parents have time with teachers and have a talk...if there's more communication between, you know, it would be better.

School participants affirmed the joint roles of the school and community in supporting language development, particularly English, though one of them questioned whether it was solely the school's role to teach English.

And it would be our responsibility, and also the community, when they're out in the world, to help them with their second language, if English is their second language (Grade 1 teacher)

Whose job is it to teach these kids English? I really wonder, do they usually think it's the school's job, and just our job and nobody else's? Like, oh no, the school should be doing that. And then I thought, really, should we be doing that really? Is that really part of our, you know like getting native like fluency? But I think that, no, I think that there's a lot of families that think they'll learn it at school. (speech and language pathologist)

Again, while acknowledging that there was a role that schools could play in supporting diverse cultures, some teachers expressed a lack of confidence to provide accurate information. One noted:

You know I mean I could do a little bit around Chinese New Year or Diwali but it's not going to be nearly what the parents convey to them and I don't know if what I'm doing is going to be kind of emphasizing the parts of whatever event, or emphasizing the significance in the way that parents would or they would want it to be highlighted.



In comparison, some school district personnel such as the multicultural liaison workers had more experience and exposure to the diversity in the community. They articulated their role in facilitating access to services and resources for families:

Families will try to find time early on for some meetings, so we have to start and try to take advantage of those precious time to communicate and to gather resources so the parent or the family can take as much as possible. That's why the continuing of the community, the school service, supporting the staff, and all these, so it's also available outside, then it will be helping to support the family.

Some family participants perceived that schools could be more receptive to CALD children entering kindergarten by providing a more welcoming environment or by spending more time with both children and parents to help ease their transition to school. When asked whether they thought home visits by teacher would be helpful, families did not appear comfortable with the idea, though some suggested a phone call would be acceptable. Instead, they preferred that the school make the effort to be more receptive as this parent suggested in order to make the children more at ease:

Provide them a more friendly environment. Friendly environment help them to fit in with other friends or classmates because that's important. If they don't feel like they fit in, they will slowly shut themselves up and then stop communicating with other students or the teachers. And then when they start to dislike the school, then there's a lot of problems – they don't want to go to school, they don't want to listen to the teachers, whatever the teacher said, they say it's wrong. They feel like it's wrong. So, and the teachers don't know how to do that, how to set a good environment or how to get them together.

While they accepted it was primarily the parents' role to prepare children for the school environment, family participants believed the school should work closely with the family in order to meet each child's needs:

Just spend more time to make the children feel —to set up the habit of learning in the school and in the group. Cooperate with the parents, to help the parents to have some—I mean every children is different, to make every children individual plan for the individual person based on their characters and their habits.

Another parent, while acknowledging the role of parents in helping children develop, indicated that communication between home and school could be improved.

I would say you know, in the school, I do want to say 'oh yeah, teachers have to do everything' because parents, as a parent you have your role to play too, you got to help your child develop. So, I think if teachers would make attempt like maybe have time with parents, and parents have time with teachers and have a talk, like a session, I don't care, it could be like evening or whatever, ... but if there's more communication between, you know, it would be better.

Community stakeholders, too, expressed their beliefs that the onus was on schools, both at the local and district level to facilitate connections with the community, including the development and implementation of policies (i.e. interrelationships between the macrosystem, exosystem, and mesosystem):

Often it starts with the principal in a school really wanting to be part of community and seeing that there's resources in the community that blend well with the school and vice versa, so, it's about openness at the school, it's about the policies that come out of school trustees and from the board around connecting with community and then, district principals and superintendent willing to actually make that happen, but on the ground, it's often principals, I think, that set the tone for who they welcome into their school.

School personnel acknowledged their responsibility in validating parents' role in contributing to their child's learning by securing their cultural identity and by building upon and maintaining their home language. A kindergarten teacher asserted her role in

educating parents about the importance of nurturing their children's home language development:

I think it's our responsibility to tell, to explain to the parents how vital it is that their cultural security is part of their learning. We can only do that and there's a comment in the report card, there are comments in the parent-teacher interviews that you know, your job is to secure their language at home. Our job is to secure their language in school and they sort of have to release that it's so important for them to make the grade that they have to disregard their home language.

In addition, the principal offered an example of enlisting other families in the school for linguistic support for those who needed it:

There's room for us to do even more work around working with the parents. And I know some things got started last year. But even to do things in the child's first language. I mean we had a PAC meeting in the fall and a parent arrived who didn't have a single word of English. Now it happened that another parent was a court interpreter who spoke Mandarin who said is it okay if I translate I said "Oh, please!" And then a dad beside me who is Filipino said "You know, I'm happy to do this too."

#### **4.3.3 Summary of findings for Research Question Two**

When asked about roles and responsibilities for supporting children's development as they transition to school, participants discussed three main areas of responsibility for the various stakeholders in preparing children for school: supporting children's development, supporting language and culture, and ways to support children's transition to school. Responses coded under these descriptive themes were organized and presented in turn under the broader construct Roles and Responsibilities in Supporting CALD Children. Participants also identified the study's three sociocultural contexts, the family, the school, and the community as all having a role in

ensuring a successful transition to school. They further expressed their beliefs about the role of the three groups of stakeholders each working from their contexts: home, school, and community in actively engaging in providing support for the child. Differences in beliefs about expectations for children on school entry in addition to attribution of responsibility for facilitating school transition arose between the groups, particularly with regard to responsibilities for nurturing both home language and English language learning. For all three contexts, participants commented on the importance of making connections between the child's microsystems (home, school, and community). Unfamiliarity with non-mainstream cultural beliefs and practices was sometimes seen as a rationale for school personnel not actively supporting cultural diversity. However, it was observed that a failure to do so runs the risk of unintentionally devaluing CALD children's and families' strengths and resources.

#### **4.4 Research Question Three**

Participants' beliefs about the kinds of school and community practices that support culturally and linguistically diverse families in helping their young children transition to school was explored in the third research question. The theme that emerged from the interview responses regarding participants' beliefs about the kinds of practices that support CALD children and families were as follows:

- Theme: Programs and Services
- Theme: Collaborative Practice

The construct created by aligning the themes identified in the interview responses regarding participants' beliefs about the kinds of practices that support CALD children and families, was as follows:

- Construct 4: Practices that Support CALD Children and Families

This construct was also derived from Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital as reflected in Moll's and Yosso's research. It supported my analysis of beliefs about practices that best served CALD children and families. That construct-driven perspective was followed by a context-oriented presentation of findings about interrelationships amongst three sets of practices that were distributed across each of the study's three contexts in specific ways: Family, Community, and School or what Bronfenbrenner would refer to as the interactions amongst the child's microsystems.

#### **4.4.1 Construct 4: Practices that Support CALD Children and Families**

Participants referred to a number of existing programs and services within the community and affiliated with the school that were helpful in supporting children's transition to school. Some of these were more targeted towards CALD children and families while others were aimed more broadly at all young children and their families. Participants also provided suggestions on ways to improve existing policies and practices to enhance home-school-community partnerships.

#### **4.4.1.1 Theme: Programs and services.**

School-based programs discussed earlier like Strong Start, and Ready Set Learn are designed to familiarize all children and their families with the kinds of learning experiences that schools value and promote in ways intended to align their habitus with that of the school. Two community participants observed that parents welcome the opportunity to participate in and benefit from the programs being offered:

We see a lot of families making use of those programs, whether the gym time or parent-child Mother Goose programs, things like that, — we see parents taking advantage of the opportunities, you know, if they can.

If you're making that environment that the child is coming into, less intimidating, a lot more friendly, and they see it as a great place to come to, and they look forward to coming to school, that's really important. And so, having those introductory sections and a Strong Start type of program helps I think the child get a little more ready, especially for the socialization part of it, and whatever level of structure is going to be provided.

Welcome to Kindergarten, a school-based program designed to be a first introduction to school for both children and families was mostly viewed as a positive experience by participants. A family member pointed out that for her child, Welcome to Kindergarten was the first introduction to the school. Another parent saw the program as an opportunity for both teacher and child to become familiar with one another:

I would refer to like everyone and saying is really wonderful you know; the kids is more excited to go the kindergarten. It's really beautiful, yes. And then people, they knows what is our teacher, who is our teacher, and what is my school. And right way, the teacher could see whose children does knows like how to cut the paper, how they knows choose the shape, you know all those things, so then teacher will have the knowledge and the idea whose children said this and this.

Another family member, however, considered that opportunities for the children to interact with one another and the teacher could be improved and that a more kindergarten classroom-like experience would be helpful, familiarizing them with the educational field and its accompanying habitus.

I would say that it's kind of, – for me, the last time I attended, I find it a little bit disorganized, a little bit disorganized. Because I would think I would probably say, a little bit of physical activity, it's more arts and crafts and stuff like that, so probably little bit more, a little bit of games so there's social interaction.

Teachers observed that the program offered an opportunity to get a 'heads up' on children entering kindergarten and to introduce parents to the school's expectations.

So it's kind of a good opportunity to get – it's a very brief glimpse – but kind to see the parent-child interaction and there's a few that we kind of flag as ones we might be concerned about for one reason or another.

I think we're kind of, like we're on the right track with things like starting the Welcome to Kindergarten and the Strong Start programs. It's getting parents involved kind of in the education system here at an earlier stage, not necessarily to push the academic part of it earlier, but just make the more familiar with how the education system works and what they could do to kind of help their child.

The principal, however, offered the view that perhaps the school was missing an opportunity to view how well parents supported their children in non-academic ways, explicitly recognizing the important contributions of families' capital to children's learning.

I think there is the practical thing and that is this whole Welcome to K initiative. It was really developed for schools like this where people were making assumptions that parents aren't preparing their kids for school, but I see the Filipino families and I think man, they do a great job of loving their kids.

Other services such as those provided by multicultural liaison workers, youth family workers, and settlement workers, proactively assist families in understanding how the school system works, facilitate communication between home and school, and help families in accessing specialized community resources. This is captured in four different participants' observations.

The youth family worker, for example, observed that the SWIS (settlement workers in schools) workers and the multicultural liaison workers were essential in engaging families with the school, making connections between microsystems and serving as an important initial contact between home and school:

All the SWIS workers in the area, all the multicultural workers. Those are the people that draw in our parents because typically, just posters alone don't bring in parents. They need to have that personal contact... So, what they're doing is sort of approaching and meeting kids and families in their home at first and then drawing them into the school.

A community health nurse expressed their admiration for the school's Welcome to Kindergarten event, which they thought particularly supported CALD families with the provision of visual aids and interpreters including multicultural liaison workers:

I think that Welcome to Kindergarten was a lovely example, bringing in all the home-school workers. Seeing what they did there, I always call that the poster child for how I like to see these Welcome to Kindergartens. Lots of visual aids for when the families are challenged listening to the English, using the English, bringing in interpreters.

A kindergarten teacher found the translation services of the multicultural liaison workers invaluable:



I mean the ESL is great if we need to sit down with a parent and they don't understand English, we can phone for a translator and we have wonderful translators that really kind of understand what's going on. So, the translators, I think are great. Sometimes I find that you want to talk about something that happened with the child and the grandma comes to pick them up who doesn't speak any English, so that's difficult.

The depth and breadth of their services, however, is sometimes misunderstood and consequently underused, according to one of the multicultural liaison workers:

This is a constant, constant... we're trying to educate— you know it's harder to educate the school staff than the parents. But constantly we have to educate the school staff, letting them know that – because they always look at us just as translators.

#### **4.4.1.2 Theme: Collaborative practice across contexts.**

When asked about the ways in which all stakeholders could work together in helping children transition to school, all of the participants talked about the importance of connections between and amongst the three contexts identified in the study: between families and school, families and community, community and school. Home-school-community collaboration was viewed positively by all participants. However, several observed that while pockets of best practices existed throughout, they tended to exist in silos, making it difficult to build them in a systemic manner.

The principal observed “there’s a lot more room where we could connect with them [the community], because here, it looks like everything is kind of in silos.” He viewed this “detachment” as result either of the lack of an “overall vision” or a tendency to tokenism at the district level, which manifested in a lack of action:

But if you go further down as far as the community links, there's no one at the district that's kind of the champion or just saying this is important and people might talk about it but it's just talk.

Community-school partnerships were seen by participants as an invaluable resource for supporting children and families. Both community and school participants mentioned the community schools team concept as an exemplar of an existing practice that managed to work across organizations to support children and their families.

The youth family worker outlined the various team members from the schools and community that work together to help connect students, families, school staff, and community partners to out of school programming and events designed to increase the well-being of students and families in the community.

That's where the community schools team concept comes in really well and the partnerships that we have with our multicultural workers, with our SWIS workers, with the area counsellors, with the mental health teams, with the drug and alcohol teams. Like it's all the broader team perspective so we're all part of this large team to help try and support all the kids and families.

A neighbourhood house staff member, while acknowledging the importance of the available support services and the existing relationship between the school and community, suggested:

We've got a lots of, the settlement support services in the schools, and stuff are really important. We also need to find a way to integrate that a lot better ... You know it's a bit of a different approach, but also we have workers here that do both of them and are able to do little bit but it's only because we have some relationships with the settlement workers in the schools that they'll say "oh, we're working with the same person or the same family" or whatever.

In addition, family and community participants, commenting on the advantages of preschool and daycare experiences in helping young children with the transition to kindergarten noted that more communication between the school, particularly the kindergarten teacher and the child's preschool or daycare teacher would facilitate that transition not only for children and their families but also for the school staff.

Community participants found, too, that the practice of shuffling administrators to different schools frequently was detrimental to building connections between the school and the community:

The opportunity for an administrator to get to know what happens in the community, and what happens at the neighbourhood house, and how can we open our school up more and have our students and teachers open up more to what's going on in the community, and vice versa, us be more involved with what's happening in the schools, and then bringing families and parents into that kind of community environment. It's like — you know I said earlier, it takes a community to raise a child. That community involves families, schools, and organizations.

For the school personnel that were more directly engaged with the community, more opportunities for the various service providers to network with one another and also to provide more flexible scheduling of meetings and events to accommodate families' time constraints were suggested. A multicultural liaison worker explained that while school personnel try to accommodate families' needs for flexible scheduling, further adjustments that included evening meetings were required:

Many are trying to be flexible, like after school meetings, before school meetings, some counsellors — area counsellors try to meet even until after four, some do a home visit, — not very often, but will try in some cases needed to be. In 5 o'clock

with the speech pathologist, or something. But some other tapping resource, need more be even beyond those times, so that's why we're calling 8 o'clock, 10 o'clock.

Family participants' suggestions for collaboration included opportunities for incoming kindergarten children and families to participate in school events, such as a concert or a sports activity or an annual family day. Further, they proposed opportunities to visit the kindergarten classroom and meet the teacher before their children actually started school. As one parent explained, "just they need to get together, all of them, the school, the communities, and the families." Another parent observed that families are more likely to be responsive to school-initiated collaborative activities:

It should come from the school. Because if it comes from the community, our parents are like "it's not really — we don't really feel obligated" but if it's coming from the school and the community participate and the family participates to make the child develop.

#### **4.4.2 Contexts for Supportive Practices.**

Having presented findings arising from Construct 4 and its associated themes, I turn to a contextual approach using Bronfenbrenner's framework to examine the relationships amongst the child's microsystems to further explore Research Question Three. Here, I focus on the three social contexts of family, school, and community for collaborative practices that can support children transitioning to kindergarten.

#### 4.4.2.1 The family context.

A multicultural liaison worker observed that children whose parents engage more with their child at home are the most prepared for school. They believed that the time spent with families helped children develop new relationships with others outside the family, which in turn allowed them to be more receptive to learning:

The kids that are ready to go to school are the ones that have more interaction with their parents. They're kids that have families that really take time to be with their kids so that prepares them to build relationships with other people which includes like classmates and you know, teachers I always think it always comes from the family.

They also recognized that financial and time constraints often hindered families' ability to spend quality time with their children:

The biggest problem is like, because most of the families struggle financially and they tend to have more than one child so, which means leaving the kids to grandparents or babysitters ... I think they have less time with their parents and then when it is time to go to school, then they're still not ready — they're still like — they haven't grown.

One of the teachers found that in her experience, parents were eager to help at the school: “these parents are eager to help. I don't usually run into parents that are not willing to help out with the kids in any capacity.” Another believed that it was too difficult to try and involve parents in school activities:

I don't have them coming in to volunteer. They have helped on field trips. We generally haven't had them come into volunteer.... I'd probably say that we haven't sort of bent over backwards either to try and get parents in volunteering. And part of it is, I think we find that it can be more difficult sometimes because the parents are quite unfamiliar with what our school system looks like. It's so different from their own experience in their own countries and when they come in because of that,

they're a little bit hesitant or they feel, maybe a bit reluctant to kind of try and use their English in the classroom so they tend to kind of hover around their own child.

On the other hand, the speech and language pathologist reflected that the family's involvement did not necessarily have to involve volunteering or working at school functions but "just having some communication with the teacher. And showing up for parent-teacher interviews so that you know how your kid is doing and just being aware of what's going on."

While noting the value of parents being involved with their children's school, these respondents also acknowledged some of the barriers that CALD families faced in participating in school activities deemed to facilitate children's academic success. The speech and language pathologist suggested alternative ways of participating that potentially would be more accessible to families yet still did not suggest alternatives that might be more congruent with families' beliefs and values about engagement with their children's teachers (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2013; Epstein, 2018).

#### **4.4.2.2 The school context.**

Some participants discussed the importance of the role of the school in providing support and resources but also by showing respect and recognizing the strengths that the children and families bring to the school. The family-youth worker observed developing a relationship between home and school was paramount in order to alleviate the sense of loss parents can have when their child first starts school:

For me it's connection with the teacher – like parents having connection with the teacher. I think that relationship is really, really important because it's for the children but it's also for the parents because there's a huge loss. And many of the kindergarten classes and Grade 1s I've dealt with there's always a parent that still in the cloak room that doesn't want to leave their kid.

A parent also commented on the importance of a positive parent-teacher relationship:

The teacher should have as much as she can, a relationship with the parents. So be able to be open and honest with the parent without having to feel 'oh if I tell this parent, that her child is doing this or doing that, the parent is going to freak out', or whatever.

However, as noted earlier (4.3.2.3) when asked whether the opportunity to have home visits from the teacher would be helpful, only one parent was supportive of the idea. Others thought that visiting the kindergarten classroom before their child started school was more important. It may be that some parents feel the power differential in such situations, and are apprehensive of being judged by an authority figure.

Encouraging families to share different aspects of their culture was seen by several participants as an important validation of the cultural strengths and resources that both children and families can share with the school. The principal, when recounting experiences of having children share their stories about their cultural heritage which provided the teachers with background knowledge that could help support the students, opined that by offering families this opportunity, it provided a way of honouring the child's cultural identity, reflecting Cummins' goal of promoting collaborative power relations.

I think we need to encourage parents to do that because a lot of them come thinking “well, I’m in Canada.” Like for me, integration is not about losing your first culture it's about embracing it and seeing how you make all this work. So, I think parents, grandparents, but teachers, every teacher, we should be honouring of who our kids are.

Similarly, the public health nurse commented enthusiastically on a display in the school from an intermediate level classroom where the teacher had showcased students’ work on their families’ backgrounds comparing it to their present experiences in Canada.

Still, this observer’s enthusiasm was tempered by a degree of intercultural nuance.

And reading between the lines was also fascinating, that the lack of empowerment the families felt with the electronic world ... and their memories of the country they came from were much different than I thought they would’ve been. And that was a beautiful way to incorporate modern education and family background.

Several of the school participants who worked at the district level astutely noted there was an unequal distribution of resources, including staff, to support cultural diversity amongst schools, which in turn, disadvantaged some schools. A multicultural liaison worker noted:

I think some schools are more, if they have the resources and time to coordinate, sometimes – some inner city schools I’ve experienced have been more resources, those kind of, tapping on those multicultural groups, aboriginal groups coming in and share so that the kids saw them and am more proud. But others less resource, then you need people to come and coordinate and extra time for those things.

District support staff are often called to assist those schools with limited resources with activities that support parents’ involvement. A multicultural liaison worker described how they encourage families to share their cultural resources with the



school, particularly when the families did not see that they, themselves, were ‘that rich mine of sharing, so, we have to help them to see it again’:

But principals in our area at different schools are involved, like multicultural night, sometimes some kind of parent-teacher, not conferences but parent-teacher meeting. So, they will try to bring in parents’ involvement, so, multicultural dinner or something. So, giving some platform or some ways to help encourage parents to get involved.

The multicultural liaison worker went on to offer several examples of how sharing cultural resources worked in practice in some schools:

One example is the New Year, so it’s celebrated by Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese, and coastal aboriginal, Nisga’a New Year’s as well. So, a school wide event, some teachers bring us in to help them to do some class that’s on those themes and we brought in parents. For example, one grandparent did calligraphy, so they saw how well ... they can also have some events and they come in and do something that’s enriching – Filipino dance that the grandparent, the parent, is good at, so those very rich.

By bringing families into the school context, the school not only recognized families’ funds of knowledge as a resource that could be shared, but also created opportunities for connections between home and school contexts.

#### **4.4.2.3 The community context.**

While participants believed that community programs such as the library, daycare, and preschool programs offered all children and their families experiences that assisted in the transition to school, several family and community participants wished for more direct communication between the staff of these programs and the school staff. Although programs such as Strong Start, the early learning drop-in program for

children and parents and caregivers that was noted above, are seen as facilitative in making connections with the school, often families are not made aware of them. A community participant describes the benefits of Strong Start in introducing families to school:

That is a real connection for some families, especially a lot of new families that come to the community. It's key for those kind of families to be able to identify with the schools. Very often families will come and not even register their kids for kindergarten because they wouldn't know how to do that. So, having Strong Start is a really good way to coax them in being able to introduce them to the school system.

Community participants from a neighbourhood house observed that they have reached out to schools in the past, particularly for children needing extra support but the initiative is not taken up by the school.

We have reached out to schools in the past, you know, like you say with children that are going to school was some extra support needs, we've often called the schools and said "hey, you got this kids coming from our program. You need to know what makes her tick or what works for him." You know, we've done that kind of outreach ourselves. I think they should take an interest, if they know that their feeder kids are coming from here.

Participants discussed the importance of communication between community-based stakeholders and school personnel regarding the children entering school. A community librarian noticed the need for community service providers to connect all family members with the resources and services that would facilitate communication between home and school.

So, really having strong communication channels with the families, with the parents, with extended families in fact, who's going to be the connection between the child and the school, providing the parents with resources including translation and

translated documents and information, and connecting parents and families with other resources, including the library, and the health unit, and other kinds of resources like that.

A parent commented, “even if they were opportunities for the daycare teacher to talk to the kindergarten teacher, for instance, and just share some information.” One of the teachers also noted this gap and thought that more liaison between community and school would be beneficial to everyone.

The families and the schools work close together and the families are interacting with the community, but sometimes that’s where the gap is and I think one of the areas in particular, is between preschool and kindergarten, there’s absolutely no communication unless we noticed something drastic and we seek out, you know phoning and asking about a specific situation with parents’ consent, right.

The area counsellor reflected on how previously, the connections between school and community were a lot stronger with the school serving as “a hub for a community where people came for all kinds of service before things became a crisis.”

#### **4.4.3 Summary of findings for Research Question Three**

Participants’ responses were presented under the global construct Practices that Support CALD Children and Families, which encompassed two themes derived from patterns in the responses: Programs and Services, and Collaborative Practice. When asked to describe the ways in which families, schools, and community could support young children as they transition to school, participants discussed a range of programs and services available in both the school and community. While all participants agreed that the present programs and services offered support for families and children,

several family participants suggested ways to improve some of those services, particularly those programs designed to support children's transition to kindergarten. Participants also suggested how existing policies and practices could be improved, for example, community-school partnerships and home-school liaison. Amongst the school participants, it was the principal and district staff such as the multicultural liaison workers that noted gaps in collaboration amongst the various partners (home, school, and community). Contexts for collaborative practices that supported children's transition were also discussed. Although all participants supported the notion of families being engaged in their children's learning, there was some ambivalence in the actual implementation of school-initiated activities that could promote and encourage their engagement as equal partners. Participants also commented on the school's role in seeking out resources both from families and within the community and fostering home-school relationships. More liaison between community-based professionals and school personnel was also perceived as essential for coordination of services.

#### **4.5 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, an analysis of the findings employed thematic and contextual approaches. The findings revealed nine themes across participant groups which were organized and presented under four constructs drawn from the study's theoretical framework and relevant scholarship to describe participants' responses and to address each of the study's three research questions in turn.

Chapter 5 will provide more summative interpretation and implications of the findings for further research and for policy and practice in schools and communities. The chapter also offers tentative answers to the study's research questions and draws broad conclusions.

## Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

I now turn to a discussion of the findings for each of the research questions in the light of the overall conceptual framework and the relevant scholarship, in an effort to better interpret the meaning or broader significance of what families, and community and school people said about supporting children's strengths and resources.

### 5.1 Discussion of Findings: Research Question One

*What are the unique and shared beliefs that families, school- and community-based stakeholders have about supporting the strengths and resources of young culturally and linguistically diverse children and families?*

#### 5.1.1 Construct: Negotiating Cultural Identity

As discussed in Chapter 2, children's initial habitus reflects the family's particular beliefs, assumptions, and practices about the role and value of their experiences within their home culture. As they interact with their community, including school, children begin to develop a new habitus which integrates these various dimensions of their lives, negotiating between the values of school and the values of home and reformulate their identity (or in Bourdieu's terms, habitus).

In this study, participants discussed the value of helping children relate their cultural identity linked to their family's country of origin (associated with the family's habitus) to their emerging Canadian identity. I devised the construct of negotiating cultural identity (cf. Cummins, 2005; Trueba, 2002; Trueba et al., 1990) to characterize

participants' beliefs about the ways in which children's habitus is shaped by building upon their identity or acquiring different identities in order to participate in different contexts: at home, at school, and in the community. Within that broad construct, a pair of conceptually-related themes, *Engaging with culture* and *Maintaining home language*, were created for participants' responses as the most conceptually-accurate categories with which to describe and discuss participants' beliefs about helping young CALD children and their families both develop and negotiate their cultural identities.

**Themes: Engaging with culture and Maintaining home language.** Participants from all three groups stressed the importance and advantage of children developing a multifaceted cultural identity, reflecting and connecting their lives at home, at school, and in the community. Maintaining ties with extended family and countries of origin are some of the resources that they reported using to help children develop the cultural and linguistic knowledge and practices associated with their family habitus and hence their identity (cf. Levitt, 2009; Louie, 2006; Zontini & Reynolds, 2017). Not investing in those practices left many participants recounting feelings of regret and loss of connections with family or opportunities to become multilingual. Honouring children's and families' cultural identities was seen as important in helping children integrate mainstream cultural values with those of their families by school and community participants. In Bourdieu's terms, family habitus mattered. Acknowledging and supporting diversity contributes to the cultivation of a positive emotional environment

for young children (Downer et al., 2012; Sanders & Downer, 2012) and provides more meaningful learning experiences (Esteban-Guitart & Moll, 2014; Gay, 2018; González et al., 2005; Moll et al., 1992). As Cummins (2000) notes, children who see themselves represented in the school culture are more likely to be invested in learning and make sense of school practices. Both Cummins and Yosso argue that ascribing value to both the cultural and linguistic capital of CALD children, families, and their communities fosters cultural identities whereas as Bourdieu notes, insisting on assimilating individual and family habitus to the dominant habitus perpetuates mainstream identity. This school-centric cycle was noted explicitly in some responses of influential actors in the school context.

### **5.1.2 Construct: Opportunities to Access Capital**

This was the second of the two constructs drawn from the conceptual framework to characterize participants' beliefs about CALD children and families' strengths and resources and address the first research question. While traditional interpretations of Bourdieu's theory have claimed that it is the acquisition of dominant mainstream knowledge and practices that determine social and cultural capital, more recently, researchers have argued that a broader interpretation of what counts as cultural capital is needed in order to recognize and use the assets that CALD children bring with them from their homes and communities (González et al., 2005; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2008; Yosso, 2005). Yosso's concept of community cultural wealth and



Moll's funds of knowledge are examples of valuable cultural capital that non-mainstream children and families possess.

**Theme: Engaging with culture.** While identifying with one's home culture was positively viewed by participants, accommodating cultural differences was perceived as problematic by some school participants. A lack of awareness on the part of some families of the rationale for school policies and expectations combined with a lack of awareness on the part of some school staff of the basis for certain cultural traditions and practices (e.g. providing a hot lunch) was reported as a source of frustration for parents and school staff alike. While some school personnel such as the principal and the multicultural liaison workers acknowledged the issue, there did not appear to be any plan about how to address it by sensitizing all school personnel to the cultural values and beliefs of the families in order to make adjustments in school approaches and practices that would facilitate engaging families with the school to make links between children's home and school worlds by making use of the myriad cultural resources that children and their families bring. Consequently, opportunities for broadening perspectives on tolerance and discrimination (Ladson-Billings, 1999) and opportunities to nurture cultural knowledges amongst families (Yosso, 2005) were missed as illustrated in the example of the parent experiencing prejudice at school for wearing a hijab. According to Bourdieu, practices are generated by a certain habitus (Nash, 1999). The lunchtime controversy illustrates just how a practice valued in one field (home) can

become devalued in another (school) and potentially impede children's transition to school. When families and school's beliefs and expectations complement each other, children are more likely to be successful in school. Competition between family habitus and school habitus puts a significant barrier in the way of children's successful transition, creating what Downes (2014) describes as a system blockage between the microsystems of home and school.

**Theme: Maintaining home language.** Being multilingual was generally considered by interviewees to be an asset that could facilitate children's access to capital but some school participants believed that maintaining a home language could come at the expense of learning English both for parents and for children—a prevalent public perception in spite of decades of evidence that demonstrates otherwise (Cummins, 1981, 2007; Tse, 2001; Wong Fillmore, 1991). One school participant with extensive background in language acquisition doubted the efficacy of promoting bilingualism, suggesting that it is only mastery of the mainstream language (in this case, English) that counts as cultural capital in terms of academic achievement. This runs contrary to the province's Ministry of Education's (2018) policy that students' first language should be maintained to facilitate success in the school curriculum. This accords with UNESCO's (2017) statement:

It is through the mastery of the first language or mother tongue that the basic skills of reading, writing and numeracy are acquired. Local languages, especially minority and indigenous, transmit cultures, values and traditional knowledge, thus playing an important role in promoting sustainable futures. (n.p.).

Additionally, the acquisition of English with limited access to their home languages deprives learners of their linguistic capital (cf. Vélez-Ibáñez and Greenberg's term, funds of knowledge) that can both affirm home culture and language and contribute to educational success (see Cummins & Early, 2011; E. E. García & Frede, 2010; Toohey et al., 2007). In the findings, many school participants appeared unaware of both established research and current educational policy on the benefits of promoting students' first language in the classroom and the negative consequences of not doing so for students' educational achievement and sense of identity. Overlooking the funds of knowledge of families (Moll & Gonzalez, 2004) and cultural wealth of the community (Yosso, 2005) also perpetuates unequal power relations as pointed out by Bourdieu (1977; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) Cummins (2001b) and Iannacci (2015).

**Theme: Social inclusion.** Findings grouped under this theme were principally associated with narratives that described barriers for the families participating in this study to engage with their school community. These included insufficient time, family responsibilities, work flexibility, financial challenges, lack of information and knowledge about community (including school) services, and lack of confidence in their English language proficiency which hampered their access to programs and resources that could serve as cultural, linguistic, and social supports. In a sense, they were lacking social capital or what Yosso termed navigational capital in terms of the skills, networks, and resources they needed to overcome systemic barriers hampering their engagement

with the school. Further, making programs and services accessible is more than a matter of overcoming barriers of time and space. It also includes family buy-in to the kinds of practices that schools and community are promoting that may or may not align with the kinds of practices (i.e. habitus) that families value and are comfortable with. Despite the school librarian's enthusiasm for the provision of books to all kindergarten children (4.2.2.3), many families' habitus may simply not recognize the school-sanctioned practice of shared book reading as a source of cultural capital.

By contrast, several school and community participants appeared to overlook these barriers to accessing school and community resources, emphasizing instead the range of services and programs available to families. One exception was the frequent mention by both school and community participants of the lack of time for parents to spend with their children in activities or attend programs that the community and school participants believed to be important for school success.

Those community and school participants that worked specifically with CALD children and families like the multicultural liaison workers and some neighbourhood house staff also acknowledged the strengths and resources that children and families can contribute. Participants noted that what often prevented families from recognizing and utilizing their strengths and resources or funds of knowledge were their comfort levels in communicating in English which often prevented them from taking advantage of opportunities to engage in their children's schooling.

All three groups of participants in this study recognized the significance of negotiating cultural identity in acknowledging the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. On the other hand, there was a range of response with regard to opportunities for CALD families to access capital.

## **5.2 Discussion of Findings: Research Question Two**

*What are the expectations about the roles and responsibilities of family, school, and community in preparing young children from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds for their transition to school?*

### **5.2.1 Construct: Responsibilities for Preparing CALD Children for School**

Providing support for children in their development, learning language and culture, and transitioning to school were viewed by participants as important responsibilities. Differences arose however, as to expectations for fulfilling these responsibilities among the groups of participants, particularly between families and school personnel.

While participants generally agreed on the types of developmental skills needed by young children as they started school, there was sometimes a mismatch between school participants' perceptions regarding families' beliefs and values (*habitus*) in preparing their children for school and the families' actual expectations and practices. In several instances, the parents' expectations matched those of the school but were not recognized because of the school's assumptions that cultural differences were based on

presumed deficits and the challenges faced by the families, as also noted by Iannacci (2008). By ignoring family habitus and not taking into account their social and cultural capital, educators are, unintentionally or not, adhering to a deficit- rather than a strengths-based perspective of CALD children and families and perpetuating unequal power relations (Bourdieu, 1977; Cummins, 2009).

Pre-literacy skills and social skills, particularly those related to functioning in a group setting, were viewed as important for children to develop by all the participants; however, the rationale for doing so was somewhat surprising to this researcher. Both school and family participants explained that it was helpful for children to have acquired some competence in these skills in order to facilitate the teacher's responsibilities. Parents may have realized that it was in their child's best interests to develop the habitus sanctioned by the school, i.e., traditional readiness skills (Meisels, 1999), in order to ease the transition between contexts of home and school. One parent observed, "...back then that's the school job. Now it's no longer the case." The parent is clearly aware of the school's expectations for children to be ready to learn (cf. Bourdieu's knowing "the rules of the game") and acknowledges that the responsibility for equipping children with the cultural capital valued by the school has been downloaded to the family in order for their child to benefit from subsequent educational experiences, as noted in contemporary critiques of school practices to involve parents in children's schooling (e.g. Pushor & Amendt, 2018). As Bourdieu

suggests, those students whose family habitus most closely resembles that of the school, are deemed “ready” and thus empowered to achieve.

On the other hand, if expectations about what children need to learn differ between home and school, it seems incumbent upon both school and community stakeholders not only to become familiar with but also to incorporate family beliefs, practices, and values in order to help children transition well to their new learning environments (Cannella, 2005; Castro, 2014; Graue, 2006; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). Bronfenbrenner posits that it is these interrelationships between the microsystems of home, school, and community in the mesosystem that significantly influence children’s development. The “extent and nature of knowledge and attitudes existing in one setting about the other” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 25) can relate to how aware a teacher is of a child’s home life and culture or how the community endeavours to provide resources for families in an effort to reduce blockages noted in Section 5.2.2 between the systems (Downes, 2014). An understanding of how culture informs and shapes development is necessary in order to recognize the strengths that children bring from culturally diverse backgrounds (Brooker, 2002; Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Genishi & Goodwin, 2008) and avoid an imbalance of power through inadvertently reinforcing a deficit-based perspective (Cannella & Viruru, 2004).

For four decades, support for children’s home languages and cultures has proven not only to prevent first language loss but also to enhance second language learning

and cognition (Barac et al., 2014; Cummins, 2001a; E. E. García & Frede, 2010; O. García et al., 2008; Tabors, 2008). Participants from all three groups frequently stated the importance of children learning their home languages and cultures. In addition, they frequently proposed that there be opportunities to support the linguistic and cultural diversity in the community. Community participants, in particular, acknowledged the strengths and resources of CALD families and sought out occasions to celebrate and honour that diversity while recognizing that there was always room to offer more creative and flexible approaches to using the resources available in the community.

In contrast, teachers, while accepting the importance of acknowledging the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students, seemed at a loss to know how to use the cultural and linguistic resources that existed both within the educational context and the larger community. More significantly, they did not appear to recognize the potential of using CALD families as cultural guides (Vygotsky, 1978), using their expertise (i.e. their funds of knowledge) to teach about their languages and cultures in order to provide a better understanding of their worlds.

The latter finding is supported by researchers such as Moll and colleagues (González et al., 2005; Moll, 2010; Rios-Aguilar et al., 2011) and Yosso (2005, 2006) who also find that funds of knowledge or community cultural wealth reflect a kind of cultural capital underutilized by schools. Moll (2010) suggests that “identifying and mobilizing knowledge found in households and that result from families’ lived



experiences and practices” (p. 455) not only will affirm children’s home cultures and languages but will assist in developing their school-related capital by “integrating their language and cultural experiences into the social and intellectual fabric” (p. 454) of the school. While this study discovered some agreement amongst participants about expectations for what children need in order to develop and learn, there was clearly less understanding of who was best positioned to take on those responsibilities.

In a sense, *habitus* of families and *habitus* of school remained as “two solitudes” to use the Canadian phrase from Hugh McLennan’s 1945 novel of that title. Further, this may have represented a missed opportunity to take advantage of Bronfenbrenner’s advice as to the developmental value of such interrelationships and mutual understandings.

Transition to formal schooling is an important milestone in the lives of young children. How well children adjust depends to a large extent on the relationship between the family and the school, including expectations for children’s school readiness (Cannella & Bloch, 2006; Graue, 2006; Kagan, 1990; Wesley & Buysse, 2003). In this study, communication and collaboration between home and school was emphasized primarily by family and community participants with some family members noting that older siblings could play an active role in preparing the child for kindergarten. Recognizing such “cultural brokering” as another kind of cultural capital is a well-known means of utilizing CALD family and community cultural assets and

experiences to support the development of academic skills in school and to facilitate communication between families and schools (C. R. Cooper et al., 2005; C. W. Cooper et al., 2010; Reynolds et al., 2011; Yohani, 2013). The multicultural liaison workers also noted the need for integration and continuity of services and resources in the community and the school to support students and families. As Bronfenbrenner (1979), suggests, integrating the microsystems of home, school, and community enhances all aspects of children's development.

### **5.2.2 Contexts for Preparing CALD Children for School**

Although all participants across all three contexts in this study acknowledged the importance of supporting children's home languages and cultures, the finding that teachers appeared reticent to assume a leadership role in teaching about multilingualism and multiculturalism because of a lack of knowledge and their assignment of that role to families and community members was the exception. Despite the large and long-standing body of research evidence (e.g. Au, 2007; Cummins, 2007; Gregory 2017; Rogoff et al., 2017; Trueba, 2002; Tse, 2001) and current Ministry of Education (2018) policy that mandates support of multilingualism and multiculturalism, none of the teachers made reference to culturally responsive pedagogical knowledge and strategies. Using the funds of knowledge of the families and other community stakeholders, for example, was taken up by one of the teachers when invited to do so in the interviews, but not in any systematic way as the teachers

did not appear to perceive it to be their role to address the linguistic and cultural needs of their students in the fuller sense of Cummins, Yosso, and Moll and colleagues, the BC Ministry of Education's English language learning policy guidelines, or its diversity framework (2004, 2018).

While family participants acknowledged their primary role in ensuring their children learned about their home language and culture, they also believed that the school could play a more active role in communicating with families about the school's expectations and work with families in helping children transition to school. Families are raising the question of whether educators need to become more aware of families' cultural beliefs and expectations in order to fully engage them in their child's academic experiences. Nonetheless, the principal, along with the multicultural liaison workers and the home school worker offered many suggestions on how to focus on the strengths that linguistic and cultural diversity bring to the educational field. Castro, Espinosa, and Páez (2011) suggest that educators should work to become "familiar with the family cultural beliefs, practices, and values" and incorporate "linguistically and culturally appropriate outreach to, and engagement of families" (p. 270) into their teaching practices.

Community participants appeared to recognize the critical role of the community at large, including the schools, in coordinating services and making connections in order to provide the kinds of support that families need to provide their children with

successful experiences both within and outside of school. Several suggested that early childhood education and care experiences in their community could facilitate the continuity between home, community, and school contexts.

### **5.3 Discussion of Findings: Research Question Three**

*What are stakeholders' beliefs about school and community practices that could support culturally and linguistically diverse families in helping young children transition to school?*

#### **5.3.1 Construct: Practices that Support CALD Children and Families**

Transition to school is a major milestone in a child's life. The value of existing programs and services, particularly those designed to familiarize children and their families with the school transition process, was recognized by all participants. For school participants, the existing transition programs provided an opportunity to inform parents of school expectations, introduce children to the kinds of learning activities teachers deemed important for starting kindergarten, and alert the school of any potential problems. According to Bourdieu's theory (1986), familiarity with the norms associated with the field (the school) and opportunities to develop social connections or networks within that field, allow children and their families to build their cultural capital and gain access to social capital within a social network. He stated that "the volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections [they] can effectively mobilize" (p. 21). For the teachers, the transition programs were seen as a means to enculturate children and families into the

mainstream school culture, whereas the principal proposed a more strengths-based perspective by which the school could gather information about the funds of knowledge (Moll, 2010) or the kinds of capital that Yosso (2005) outlined in her community cultural wealth theory. The study's community and family participants focussed more on the socialization aspects of the programs that not only introduced children and parents to the kindergarten classroom setting but also provided more opportunities for social interaction with both the teacher and the other children, particularly for those children who had not had a lot of exposure to early childhood education or care. As explained by Bourdieu (1986), the more social connections one has, the more access to capital is possible through those connections, including knowledge of available social support systems.

Services that provided a bridge between home and school were particularly valued by participants but the need for more collaboration amongst stakeholders and integration of services across contexts was also stressed. The multicultural liaison workers, in particular, were regarded as integral to successful transition experiences for CALD children and families and the school, despite the workers feeling the scope of services they could provide was often underutilized. The multicultural liaison workers reported that they were primarily called upon by the school for translation services for children and families who needed English language support. However, because of their own cultural backgrounds and experiences, they acknowledged the value of the

cultural capital that CALD families already possess and were aware of the difficulties they may face in utilizing that capital. They appeared thus well positioned to connect families to wider community resources as well as bridging connections between family and school. This can enable families to build on their social capital by gaining access to new social networks and acquire the kind of cultural capital (understanding the norms and culture of the school) needed to ensure their children experienced successful transitions.

Participants agreed that the interrelationships among the three contexts: home, school, and community would be strengthened by more collaboration and communication amongst the various stakeholders. Rimm-Kaufman and Pianta (2000), applying Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework to examine the integrative systems in children's transition to kindergarten, argue that the transition process must be conceptualized to include an analysis of the influence and relationships amongst the contexts (or fields) of home, school, and community.

### **5.3.2 Contexts for Supportive Practices.**

Family involvement, often conceptualized as a form of capital, (Crozier, 2001; Lareau, 2000; Reay, 2000) has been shown to be a strong predictor of academic success, particularly for CALD children and their families (Nelson & Guerra, 2009; Rimm-Kaufman & Pianta, 1999). Findings in this study revealed that all participants strongly supported the role of families in helping children to develop and to experience a

successful transition to school. Consistent with the school readiness literature (e.g. Epstein, 2018; Graue & Reineke, 2014; Lareau & Horvat, 1999), school participants tended to promote family involvement with the school more in terms of traditional practices of school readiness at home and participating in school-sanctioned events like Strong Start, Ready, Set, Learn, or Welcome to Kindergarten rather than utilizing the different kinds of capital that CALD families possessed, particularly their linguistic and cultural capital in order to engage them as collaborative partners. Families in this study wanted to participate in school events but often faced barriers including work scheduling conflicts, linguistic barriers, and the lack of opportunities for connections – with the teacher and other parents. While some of these barriers were acknowledged by school and community participants, they did not offer many suggestions on how to help mitigate those barriers. In contrast, family participants suggested that more opportunities for school-led social activities that included stakeholders from the three contexts and that tried to accommodate some of the time constraints that families faced would facilitate their engagement. As Lave and Wenger (1991) pointed out, as individuals become more fully involved, moving from involvement to what more recent studies see as engagement, they move from what they termed “legitimate peripheral participants” (p. 115) to knowing and capable participants, developing their identities as members of the community. Inviting families to interact with school personnel and community members not only allows families to build relationships with

members of the educational community (including other families) but also gives them access to more social and cultural capital. As Bronfenbrenner (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) explains, it is the reciprocal interactions between and among systems that promote family engagement and children's development.

Both family and community participants expected the school to take a leadership role in creating a respectful, welcoming environment for children and families. CALD families sometimes were diffident in initiating contact with school staff but expressed their eagerness to establish an interpersonal relationship with the teacher that would foster their child's growth and learning. They did not however, consider home visits as particularly useful in developing those relationships, which may merit further exploration in light of discussion in the home-school relations and family engagement literature (e.g. Moll et al., 1992; Vassallo, 2019; Whyte & Karabon, 2016) that point to the need to attend to potentially unequal power relations between teachers and families. It may be that some parents feel the power differential in such situations, and are apprehensive of being judged by an authority figure.

School district personnel, in addition to the classroom teacher, were viewed as playing a key role in redressing this imbalance, perhaps because of their unique liaison role at the meso-level facilitating the interrelationships between the microsystems of home, school, and community. The multicultural liaison workers in particular, served



as a vital link between home and school in facilitating connections, communication, and identifying resources in the home, community, and the school.

Several of the participants commented that collaboration between school and community contexts is not as robust as in the past. While services and programs for supporting CALD children and families exist in both contexts, school and community participants admitted there is a tendency for them to operate in silos, creating overlap and missing out on invaluable opportunities to connect children and families to appropriate support systems as needed.

In general, what participants appeared to desire was more collaborative practices amongst home, school, and community contexts by making connections between microsystems. Taking into account differences in habitus, community participants, in particular, recognized that families' cultural resources could be enlisted to promote family engagement in their children's learning. This finding echoes Bronfenbrenner's (1999) argument that in order for involvement of home, school, and community to be effective in supporting young children, communication and interconnections among these systems are essential. It is the power of the mesosystems that helps to connect the microsystems in which children and families live (Swick & Williams, 2006). The finding also resonates with Cummins' (2009) claim that it is through collaborative power relations amongst family, school, and community contexts that children will experience the most success.

#### **5.4 Limitations and Strengths of the Study**

Because of the embedded case study design of this descriptive research, the focus was on one school within a CALD community. Consequently, the study's findings cannot be applied directly to other schools that are situated in a CALD neighbourhood. By selecting a single site, however, I was given the unique opportunity to learn how the family, school, and community members of this particular school viewed the strengths and resources of cultural and linguistic diversity of young children transitioning to school. Future studies could expand the scope of the sample population to include other CALD schools and neighbourhoods as well as taking into account the role of socioeconomic factors such as housing, income, or immigration status upon this study's topic.

A second limitation was the relatively small number of community participants. Several community agencies and service groups were invited to participate, but response rate was low. Interviewing a wider range of community members such as faith leaders in the community, or preschool and daycare teachers could provide additional insights into the recognition and support of the strengths and resources of CALD children and their families.

The main strengths of the research presented here include its examination of the multiple perspectives of the three stakeholder groups invested in young CALD children's development and successful school experiences. Few studies have

concurrently included the social contexts of home, school, and community, each of which plays an essential role in young children's lives. Understanding the interrelationships amongst these contexts formed a major goal of the study, allowing more contextually and culturally nuanced insights into the multiple levels of interactions between individuals and systems. This was a complex study interweaving the beliefs and expectations of families, schools, and communities in supporting young CALD children. Yet the richness of the data set and the interconnectedness of the questions proved well worth pursuing concurrently.

While there is considerable research on children's transition from home to school that problematizes linguistic and cultural differences, only recently have there been studies that have examined the relationships among culturally and linguistically diverse home, school, and community contexts that focus on the strengths and resources of those children, families and communities such as those in Anderson et al. (2015). This descriptive case study, situated in one school in a culturally and linguistically diverse urban neighbourhood contributes to the literature that examines these relationships. Asking about the strengths of CALD children and families provided participants with opportunities to consider both the strengths and resources of these families, as well as the contributions they could make to successful school transition in a positive light. It should be noted, however, that some participants reframed the discussion to privilege a dominant deficit viewpoint, or at least to highlight challenges

in promoting the strengths that others associated with cultural and linguistic diversity. Further, the fact that the study is theoretically motivated by Bronfenbrenner's and Bourdieu's work and its reinterpretations allowed me to create the original analytic framework summarized in Figure 3.7.

## **5.5 Implications for Further Research**

Based on the themes and findings of this study, it is evident that more research is needed to explore the ways in which the cultural and linguistic resources of children and families can be validated and incorporated into their schooling experiences. Similarly, the ways in which relationships between home, school, and community can be aligned in the service of transition to school could be examined.

A necessary next step would be to design a study of the correspondences among home, school, and community beliefs discovered here and practices that make use of the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. Replicating this study in other schools within other CALD communities with different socioeconomic profiles (e.g. lower income or high unemployment neighbourhood, or a poorly housed area) would yield further insights into how the strengths and resources of CALD children and families are viewed.

Although this study focussed on the beliefs of the adults in the various contexts, future research could include the voices of the children. While interviewing very young children imposes several challenges, other methods such as using drawings or dramatic

play could be utilized to explore CALD children's beliefs about their cultural and linguistic identity and how they see it represented outside of their families. Further, interviewing older children, particularly siblings of children entering kindergarten, on their retrospective views of early school transition and how the cultural and linguistic resources of their families were integrated into that transition could also build upon the findings of this study.

## **5.6 Implications for Policy and Practice in Schools and Communities**

Based on the findings from this study, several implications are possible for school and community stakeholders, and policy makers. As discussed earlier, contemporary scholars (including Cummins, Yosso, and Moll) argue that institutional policies and practices are needed that support collaborative power relations to affirm the pluralism and concomitant strengths and resources of children, families, and communities.

### **5.6.1 Valorization of diversity**

The findings from this study show that, by varying degrees, participants affirm both recent literature and provincial educational policy and guidelines (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 2004, 2018) that acknowledges and supports honouring children's home languages and cultures. The challenge for many of the school participants in this study was finding ways to translate their beliefs about diversity into culturally responsive operational school, and classroom pedagogical,

practices. While the scope of the present study was restricted to beliefs, many participants expressed a desire to overcome this challenge and design more culturally inclusive pedagogical practices that were relevant to the everyday lives of CALD children and families but claimed a lack of knowledge and experience in this regard. With educators' desire and investment, that challenge can be addressed with some targeted professional development work led by proficient cultural guides, as well as pre-service teacher education that is infused by current research on cultural and linguistic diversity. Included in this is providing educators with models that reciprocally engage families, schools, and communities (e.g. Alameda-Lawson & Lawson, 2019; Ishimaru et al., 2016; Pushor, 2015), with a particular emphasis on cultural and linguistic diversity (Alameda-Lawson et al., 2013; Olivos et al., 2011; Verdon et al., 2016; Wong, 2015). To that end, the field of culturally responsive (or relevant) pedagogy is well-developed (Au, 2007; Gay, 2018; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Schmidt & Lazar, 2011; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) and could be mobilized as a resource for district-sponsored professional learning opportunities to address this knowledge shortfall.

In terms of operational practices, the school principal pointed to a number of small improvements in the daily operation of the school that would put the stated valorization of diversity into action such as posting a world map in the school entrance way with push pins marking the countries of origin of all the families in the school or

utilizing parents as translators in more systematic ways at school meetings. Indeed, the example of the family heritage project noted by the public health nurse could be extended school-wide to honour families' cultural identities and to provide the school with invaluable information that can be used to engage families and foster their engagement to support children's learning in school. Project Chef, an experiential program designed to teach children and families about healthy food, was being implemented in the school at the time of the study. Adapting the program to reflect the multicultural population of the school, using family members as expert resources affirms cultural capital and also offers potential for collaborative power relations. Transition programs such as Strong Start, Ready Set Learn, and Welcome to Kindergarten, instead of primarily emphasizing Western cultural norms and practices, could reflect the cultures of the children attending, using their families as sources of expertise in order to meaningfully connect home and school experiences. This would allow families to assert their cultural capital and their identities.

While, as stated above, participants' beliefs variously valorized children's and families' cultural and linguistic identities, the study's findings suggest that an expanded understanding of cultural diversity is required if CALD children are going to have a successful school experience. Many examples of activities to address diversity that the participants offered followed what Meyer and Rhoades (2006) term a "food, festival, folklore, and fashion" approach which tends to consist of occasional events, emphasizes

cultural differences and potentially promotes stereotypes. Stakeholders working with CALD children and families need sustained opportunities to discuss and critically examine their own beliefs, values, and practices about cultural diversity and systems of power and prestige (Gorski, 2006, 2008). It is equally important for them to recognize the strengths and resources that individuals have rather than using a deficit model of linguistic and cultural differences that assumes a responsibility to intervene. Both community and school participant groups expressed their appreciation of having a chance to discuss questions about diversity. Alongside enhanced district-sponsored opportunities for professional learning discussed above, continuing these affirming discussions with families at the school- community level would allow all stakeholders to participate in more equitable ways by sharing their cultural backgrounds and experiences.

In sum, the findings suggest that research knowledge and public policy established over the past forty years about the benefits of multilingualism and maintenance of home languages needs to be better and more comprehensively translated into practice and perspective in all Canadian schools and classrooms in order to provide the conditions for educational success for culturally and linguistically diverse children. Fortunately, collaborative research conducted in Canadian classrooms provides inspirational examples of teaching through a multilingual lens (e.g. Cummins



et al., 2015; Cummins & Early, 2011; Cummins & Persad, 2014; Naqvi et al., 2013; Roessingh, 2011).

Study findings revealed three themes that could well serve as pillars for helping CALD children transition to kindergarten successfully: *Engaging with culture*, *Maintaining home language*, and *Social inclusion*. These three themes could be used to organize goals for action, for educational and community development, and for teacher education.

### **5.6.2 Communication and Collaboration**

Bronfenbrenner argues that it is the reciprocal interrelationships amongst the microsystems at the mesosystem level that promote children's development. In the present study, although there were programs and services in place that support CALD children and families, participants were able to offer recommendations for improved communication and collaboration practices to strengthen connections between families, schools, and communities. Providing a welcoming school environment and flexible scheduling of meetings and activities for working parents would help reduce barriers to family engagement with their children's learning at school. Family participants wanted to be engaged, expressing their desire for a more collaborative relationship with their child's teacher where they were treated as genuine partners in their child's education. Cultural assumptions on both the school's and families' parts can result in misunderstanding. As Villegas and Lucas (2002b) argue, teachers are the change agents

within the system and therefore, must take the initiative in facilitating effective partnerships with families from diverse backgrounds. If educators felt more able to take the initiative to determine what the family's expectations are for the child's development and learning, perhaps these misunderstandings could be mitigated.

Examining the ways in which children's learning and growth can be interpreted beyond a Western monolingual, monocultural perspective will promote understanding of how language and culture informs and shapes development, allowing families, schools, and communities to recognize the strengths of CALD children and broaden expectations for their educational success (Doucet & Tudge, 2007; Edwards, Blaise, & Hammer, 2009). For example, educators could jointly plan initial home visits or telephone calls with families before their children start school with the intention of establishing truly collaborative relationships between home and school. In addition, these would provide opportunities for both families and educators to gain insight into the strengths of the children and the resources of families, school, and community that can be brought to bear upon supporting children.

For CALD parents and for teachers, multicultural liaison workers provided an invaluable bridge, assisting with communication and intercultural needs between home and school as well as connecting families with resources in the community. However, their services were stretched thin across the school district where the study took place, with 23 multicultural liaison workers reportedly spread over 101 schools. There may be

opportunities to use volunteers in the community to assist with some aspects of their workload. For example, the neighbourhood house had developed a system of intercultural connectors grounded in the community's resources.

Instead of operating in silos, both schools and communities could share resources and knowledge. Early childhood education and care staff have established strong relationships with children and families. Including them in some of the school's transition practices could provide valuable insights for the teacher regarding the incoming child's learning and development, alert the school to any particular concerns, and more importantly, identify both children's and families' strengths and resources. Other community stakeholders such as community librarians could also offer a perspective on CALD children who have participated in their programs and share information about available multicultural resources such as picture book collections in different languages and other resources that recognize diversity and encourage inclusion. Sharing and valuing community cultural wealth in its various forms (particularly linguistic, social, familial, and navigational capital) allows resources to be used more effectively.

Community and school participants with long-standing experience with CALD populations noted that practices had changed over the years, becoming less collaborative. These participants suggest the need for a return to a community school model where the school is intentionally designed as part of the community and all

stakeholders commit to collaboration in both education and community development. A comprehensive culturally responsive home-school-community partnership can serve CALD children and families by building on the existing strengths and resources that exist in all three contexts in addition to creating openings for new and authentic partnerships. In sum, to return to the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner that supported this study, acknowledgement of the rich sources of capital of CALD children and families can guide the interrelationships amongst children's microsystems to provide them with the opportunities to develop and learn to their fullest potential.

## **5.7 Concluding Remarks**

In this study, I offer a description of the beliefs that home, school, and community stakeholders hold about the strengths and resources of CALD children and families. One contribution made by this study was the finding that families, community, and school stakeholders in all three contexts strive to provide children with the kinds of experiences they believe will contribute to success both in school and beyond. Nonetheless, differences persisted amongst the multi-stakeholders' perceptions about how to support CALD children's development and school transition, and remove barriers to effective social inclusion. A second contribution to knowledge is the finding that deficit thinking still prevailed in some contexts regarding beliefs about the strengths and resources of CALD families and practices to support cultural and

linguistic diversity and school transition. This finding reinforced observations in other research showing the cultural and linguistic capital that CALD children and families bring is not always recognized, reflecting inequitable power relations between students and their families and schools. Despite extensive research evidence and current policy guidelines, some practitioners look at cultural and linguistic diversity as a challenge and are either unaware or ignore mandates to incorporate strengths-based perspectives into their practices. A third, related contribution to knowledge is the finding that the research on the benefits of multilingualism, including maintaining home languages is frequently ignored in stakeholders' beliefs and expectations for practice. The fourth contribution this study makes is its discovery that while there was agreement amongst many participants as to expectations for what children need to develop and learn, those participants were much less aware of each stakeholder group's understandings of those responsibilities. Fifth, the study contributes to our understanding of professional leadership and teachers' knowledge about learning, in its finding that teachers were reticent to teach about home languages and cultures and tended to assign that role to families and community.

A final contribution is the study's focus on the strengths that participants associated with cultural and linguistic diversity which allowed participants not only to reflect on their beliefs and practices about cultural and linguistic diversity, to think afresh about opportunities to employ the cultural wealth of CALD families and

communities, and to consider the possibility of entering into collaborative relations of power across contexts.

Recognizing the capital developed within families' social and familial contexts provides the opportunity for CALD children to realize their hopes and dreams (i.e. their aspirational capital). As one participant explained, "there should always be room... to celebrate their difference and their culture. Because the more you know you are accepted as being who you are the more you will grow." With this work, I would challenge researchers, practitioners, and policy leaders to engage in conscious reflective deliberation and consider reframing their perspectives on intentionally using and supporting the strengths and resources of CALD children and their families as an opportunity to better serve all children and their families.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A Letters of Invitation and Consent for Families

#### **Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices**

Dear Kindergarten Family Members,

This research project studies the **strengths and resources** of young children from culturally and linguistically diverse families. We want to learn more about the learning strengths, language, and cultural resources of young children as they begin school. To do this, we want to learn more about the **beliefs and practices** of families, people working at the school, and members of the community who work with kindergarten children. We are writing you because you are a family member of a kindergarten child from a diverse family background at XXX Elementary.

This project is being carried out by Ms. Jane Wakefield under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Ford. The research will form the basis for Ms. Wakefield's thesis for her doctoral degree at UBC. If you take part in this study, you and any other adult family members who would like to take part, would be asked to answer some questions about your family background. After the background questions you will take part in an approximately half hour interview with questions such as "How do you help your children starting school?"; "What should children know before starting school?" The results of this study will help us learn more about ways to support families from culturally and linguistically backgrounds as they help their young children begin to school.

If you would like to take part in our project, **please complete the consent form that is attached and return to the classroom teacher**. For any questions you might have about this project, please contact Jane Wakefield at the email or phone below. Thank you.



**CONSENT FORM**  
**(For each Adult Family Member)**

**Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices**

**Please read this carefully. Each family member who wants to take part in the study must sign a consent form.**

**Why are we doing this project?**

We want to learn more about the ways families, schools, and communities view the learning strengths of young children and the way that children are supported when they start school. We want to learn how to help strengthen the ways home, school, and community work together to help children as they start school. You are being invited to participate in this research study because you are adult family members of a kindergarten child from a diverse background in Grenfell Elementary.

This study is funded by a research fund at UBC. It is being carried out by Dr. Laurie Ford and Ms. Jane Wakefield. The research will form the basis for Ms. Wakefield's thesis for her doctoral degree at UBC.

**What happens if you agree to take part in the study?**

If you agree to take part in this study:

- You will be asked to answer a short background questionnaire.
  - The questions will take about 15 minutes to complete.
- You will be asked to take part in an interview.
  - The interview that take about 30 to 45 minutes at a time and a place of your choosing
  - The interview will be recorded
  - You will have a chance to review a summary of the interview.

**What are the risks and benefits if I take part in the study?**

- There are no risks that we can think of if you take part in the study.
- You might benefit from the chance to share your beliefs about young children's strengths and resources and to learn about others' beliefs and practices to help children succeed at school.

**How will your identity be protected?**

- The information you give us will not be shared with anyone outside of our project team. **No individual information will be reported and no person taking part will be identified by name** in any reports about the study.
- The only people who will have access to the information you give us are the researchers working on this project.
- A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individuals who take part will not be identifiable in such a report.

**Who can you contact if you have concerns about the study?**

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

By signing below, you confirm that you want to take part in the project and that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

**How will we share what we learn?**

- We will share what we learn from the study through talks at schools, with families, and with others in the community.
- We will also present our work to other professionals.
- Our goal is to listen to your views of how an understanding of children's strengths and cultural and linguistic resources can be best used in the transition to school when deciding how to share our research findings with the broader society (e.g., school districts, policy makers).

**Who can you contact if you want more information about the study?**

If you have any questions about the research study, we will be happy to answer any questions about the research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact the Co-Principal Investigator, Jane Wakefield at the phone or email listed below.

Jane Wakefield

**Phone:** XXX-XXX-XXXX

**Email:** XXXXX@XXX

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw your consent and end participation at any time. There are no repercussions for withdrawing from the study and if you chose to do this then all information provided by you will be destroyed.

If you agree to participate in this study, please return the signed consent form to your child's teacher. You may keep pages 1 and 2 for your own records.

## Consent

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understood the information above and that you have received a copy of the consent form for your own records.

I consent to participate in the study “Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices.”

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Your Name Here

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

### Contact Information

Please provide your name and email address so we can contact you to arrange a time to meet if you choose to participate in this study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Email Address

## Appendix B Letters of Invitation and Consent for School Personnel

### Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices

Dear (INSERT NAME OR POSITION OF SCHOOL PERSONNEL)

We are conducting a research study that explores the **strengths and resources** of young children from culturally and linguistically diverse families. Historically the research on and practice of working with such families has emphasized their **challenges**. Few studies have examined the strengths and resources of these families and their children. We are particularly interested in learning more about the **beliefs and practices** of families, communities, and schools regarding the learning and developmental strengths and linguistic and cultural resources of young children entering school. Our intent is to examine those **beliefs** from the perspectives of family, school, and community. We also wish to examine the **practices** schools and communities employ to build on culturally and linguistically diverse children's strengths and resources.

This study is funded by the Hampton Research Fund at UBC and is being carried out by Ms. Jane Wakefield under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Ford. The research will form the basis for Ms. Wakefield's thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Human Learning, Development, and Culture in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

You are being contacted because your school principal indicated a willingness for your school to take part in our project and you are involved in some capacity in working with children in kindergarten.

A variety of data collection methods will be used during this research, including interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, document analysis, and observations of classroom and school environments across the three phases of the project.

If you take part in this project, in **Phase 1** you will be asked to complete a short background questionnaire that will take about 20 minutes and an individual interview no longer than one hour in length. The interview will include questions such as "How does the family/community support children starting school?" ; "What should children know before starting school?" The interviews will take place at a mutually agreed upon location outside of the typical school day.

If you are a kindergarten teacher, we would also ask you to distribute letters of invitation to participate in this study to parents of children in your classroom from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

In **Phase 2**, you will be asked to take part in a focus group interview and discuss specific kindergarten transition practices (e.g. school intake interviews) and teaching practices (e.g. play-based centres) where the linguistic and cultural diversity of their students are identified. Secondly, you will be asked how the diverse linguistic and cultural knowledge and practices of the community informs kindergarten transition and teaching practices. The focus group will take approximately 1 to 2 hours and will take place at a mutually agreed upon location outside of the typical school hours. The results of this study

may help to build upon the diversity of family and community linguistic and cultural knowledge and practices in assisting young children transition to school.

If you would like to take part in this research project, please contact Jane Wakefield at XXXXX@XXX or XXX.XXX.XXXX. We will be pleased to answer any questions you might have about this project.

Thank you for considering this research request. We look forward to hearing from you.

**CONSENT**  
**(School Personnel)**

**Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices**

Please read this carefully. If you want to take part in the study, sign one copy. Keep the other copy for your records.

**Why are we doing this project?**

The purpose of this project is to explore the beliefs and practices of family, school, and community members that identify and support the learning strengths and resources of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and families. The project includes three phases that build upon one another in order help us better understanding the relationship between beliefs and practices in homes, schools, and communities and the impact of this relationship on early school success. In this project we will study how familiy, school, and community members view the learning strengths of young children and the kinds of resources that support them entering school. You are being invited to participate in this research study because you are involved in some capacity with kindergarten children at Grenfell School.

This study is funded by XXX at UBC and is being carried out by Ms. Jane Wakefield under the supervision of Dr. Laurie Ford. The research will form the basis for Ms. Wakefield's thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Human Learning, Development, and Culture in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

**What happens if you take part in the project?**

If you say "yes" to taking part in the study:

- You will be asked to complete a short background questionnaire.
  - The questionnaire will take about 15 minutes.
  - You can complete the questionnaire at a time and place that works best for you.
- You will be asked to take part in an individual interview.
  - The interview will last approximately 30- 40 minutes
  - The interview will be audiorecorded.
  - The interview will take place in a location which is mutually agreed upon and determined by you and interviewer.
  - The interview will typically take place outside of normal school hours.
  - You will be given an opportunity to review a summary of the interview.
- You will be asked to take part in a focus group interview to discuss school practices that support culturally and linguistically diverse young learners.
  - The focus group interview will last approximately 1-2 hours
  - The focus group will be audiorecorded and later transcribed for data analysis.
  - The focus group will take place in a location which is mutually agreed upon and determined by the participants prior to the time of the focus group.
  - The focus group interview will typically take place outside of normal school hours.
- Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you may choose to pull out of the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact on your work at the school.

**What are the risks and benefits if I take part in the study?**

- There are no obvious risks to participating in these studies.
- A potential benefit is the chance to share your beliefs about young children's strengths and resources and to learn about others' beliefs and practices. This may enhance children's opportunities for successful school experiences.

**How will your identify be protected?**

- The information you give us is confidential. **No individual information will be reported and no person taking part or school will be identified by name** in any reports about the study.
- The only people who will have access to the information you give us are the researchers working on this project.
- A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.
- We cannot promise confidentiality for the focus group. We encourage participants not to discuss the content of the focus group to people outside the group; however, we can't control what participants do with the information discussed.

**How will we share what we learn?**

- We will share what we learn from the study at presentations with professionals and families in the local community as well as professional scholarly meetings.
- Our goal listen to your perspectives of how an understanding of children's strengths and cultural and linguistic resources can be best utilized in the transition to school when deciding how to share our research findings with the broader society (e.g., school districts,policy makers).

**Who can you contact if you have concerns about the study?**

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research subject and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services at 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

**Who can you contact if you want more information about the study?**

If you have any questions about the research study, we will be happy to answer any questions about the research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact the Co-Principal Investigator, Jane Wakefield at XXXXX@XXX or XXX.XXX.XXXX.

By signing below, you confirm that you want to take part in the project and that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature to participate in the study

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of the Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C Letters of Invitation and Consent for Community Members

### Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices

Dear (INSERT NAME OR POSITION OF COMMUNITY MEMBER)

We are conducting a research study that explores the **strengths and resources** of young children from culturally and linguistically diverse families. Historically the research on and practice of working with such families has emphasized their **challenges**. Few studies have examined the strengths and resources of these families and their children. We are particularly interested in learning more about the **beliefs and practices** of families, communities, and schools regarding the learning and developmental strengths and linguistic and cultural resources of young children entering school. Our intent is to examine those beliefs from the perspectives of family, school, and community. We also wish to examine the practices schools and communities employ to build on culturally and linguistically diverse children's strengths and resources.

This study is funded by the Hampton Research Fund at UBC and is being carried out by Ms. Jane Wakefield. The research will form the basis for Ms. Wakefield's thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Human Learning, Development, and Culture in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

The principal of XXX school in your community indicated a willingness for the school to take part in our project. We want to learn from the school personnel, families of children, and community members. You are being contacted because you are involved in some capacity working with kindergarten children or their families in your community.

A variety of data collection methods will be used during this project across three phases. If you take part in this project, in **Phase 1**, you will be asked to complete a short background questionnaire that will take about 10 minutes to complete followed by an individual interview approximately 30 minutes in length. The interview will include questions such as "How does the community support children starting school?" ; "What should children know before starting school?" In **Phase 3**, you will be asked to complete a survey about community assets and resources (e.g. early childhood programs, EDI results) and their utility in helping children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds transition to school. Those participants who have expert knowledge about community services for early childhood, immigrants, and families will be invited to take part in a follow-up semi-structured interview. The interview will take no longer than 1 hour. Note that **Phase 2** only involves school personnel. The results of this study may help to build upon the diversity of community linguistic and cultural knowledge and practices in assisting young children transition to school.

If you would like to take part in this research project, please contact Jane Wakefield at XXXXX@XXX or XXX.XXX.XXXX. We will be pleased to answer any questions you might have about this project.

Thank you for considering this research request. We look forward to hearing from you.



## **CONSENT** **(Community Members)**

### **Challenge or Opportunity? The Strengths and Resources of Young Children from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families: Home, School, and Community Beliefs and Practices**

Please read this carefully. If you want to take part in the study, sign one copy. Keep the other copy for your records.

#### **What are we doing this study?**

The purpose of the study is to describe how communities identify and build their own community resources in assisting culturally and linguistically diverse young children and their families with the transition to school. The project includes three phases that build upon one another in order help us better understanding the relationship between beliefs and practices in homes, schools, and communities and the impact of this relationship on early school success. You are being invited to participate in this research study because you are a community member involved in some capacity with kindergarten children at xxx Elementary.

This study is funded by the Hampton Research Fund at UBC and is being carried out by Ms. Jane Wakefield. The research will form the basis for Ms. Wakefield's thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, in Human Learning, Development, and Culture in the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia.

#### **What happens if you take part in the study?**

If you agree to participate in this study

- You will be asked to respond to a short background questionnaire.
  - The questionnaire will take about 10 minutes.
  - You can complete the questionnaire at a time and place that works best for you.
- You will be asked take part in an individual interview
  - The interview that will last approximately 30 minutes.
  - The interview will be audiorecorded and later transcribed for data analysis.
  - The interview will take place in a location which is mutually agreed upon and determined by you and interviewer prior to the time of the interview.
  - You will have an opportunity to review a summary of the interview.
- You will be asked to complete a survey about community assets and resources (e.g. early childhood programs, EDI results) and their utility in helping children from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds transition to school.
  - The survey should take no more than 20 minutes.
- If you are directly involved with community services for early childhood, immigrants, and families, you will be invited to take part in a follow-up semi-structured interview.
  - The interview will take no longer than 30 minutes.
  - The interview will be audiorecorded and later transcribed for data analysis
  - The interview and will take place in a location which is mutually agreed upon by the you and interviewer before the interview.
  - You will have an opportunity to review a summary of the interview.

**What are the risks and benefits if I take part in the study?**

- There are no obvious risks to participating in these studies.
- A potential benefit is the chance to share your beliefs about young children's strengths and resources and to learn about others' beliefs and practices. This may enhance children's opportunities for successful school experiences.

**How will your identify be protected?**

- The information you give us is confidential. **No individual information will be reported and no person taking part will be identified by name** in any reports about the study.
- The only people who will have access to the information you give us are the researchers working on this project.
- A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**How will we share what we learn?**

- We will share what we learn from the study at presentations with professionals and families in the local community as well as professional scholarly meetings.
- Our goal listen to your perspectives of how an understanding of children's strengths and cultural and linguistic resources can be best utilized in the transition to school when deciding how to share our research findings with the broader society (e.g., school districts, policy makers).

**Who can you contact if you have concerns about the study?**

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research subject and/or your experiences while participating in this study, you may contact the Research Subject Information Line in the UBC Office of Research Services 604-822-8598 or if long distance e-mail RSIL@ors.ubc.ca or call toll free 1-877-822-8598.

**Who can you contact if you want more information about the study?**

If you have any questions about the research study, we will be happy to answer any questions about the research at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact the Co-Principal Investigator, **Jane Wakefield** at XXXXX@XXX or XXX.XXX.XXXX..

By signing below, you confirm that you want to take part in the project and that you have received a copy of this consent form for your own records.

---

Signature to participate in the study

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Printed Name of the Participant

## Appendix D Recruitment Poster for Families

### Join in a UBC research project



#### **Strengths of young children & their families: Home, school, & community beliefs & practices**

**WHO?** [REDACTED] Kindergarten families (mothers, fathers, grandparents)

**WHEN and WHERE?** At a place and time that is convenient for you

#### **WHAT'S INVOLVED?**

1. Complete a brief questionnaire (10 minutes)
2. Take part in an interview (about 30 minutes) about what helps children get a good start at school.
3. Join the study and your kindergarten-aged child will receive a book.

#### **WHY ARE WE DOING THIS?**

The project is part of Jane Wakefield's doctoral thesis, supervised by Dr. Laurie Ford. This study will help us learn more about ways that families, schools and communities can work together to help young children from diverse backgrounds as they begin school.

**INTERESTED?** Please email Jane Wakefield at [REDACTED]  
or phone at [REDACTED].

The University of British Columbia  
Dept. of Educational & Counselling Psychology, & Special Education  
2125 Main Mall  
Vancouver, BC Canada V6T 1Z4



a place of mind  
THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

## Appendix E Background Questionnaires

### FAMILY MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Kindergarten child's family name: Given name:
2. Date of birth: Gender:

#### Family Background

3. Family and Household members: Please list name, age, and occupation

	NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION
mother			
father			
children			
other adults in the household			
other children			

4. If the child that goes to Kindergarten has any older brothers or sisters, did they go to Kindergarten? at this school?
5. What is your relationship to the child who goes to Kindergarten?
6. Where were you born? Date of birth:
7. When did you come to Canada?
8. What is your race/ethnic background?
9. Aboriginal origins (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Metis)
  - a. East Asian origins (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
  - b. Eastern and Southern European origins (e.g., Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Italian, Greek, Spanish)
  - c. Northern and Western European origins (e.g., British, Scottish, German, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Dutch)
  - d. South Asian origins (e.g., East Indian, Punjabi, Pakistani)
  - e. Southeast Asian origins (e.g., Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese)
10. What language(s) are spoken at home? Main: Additional:
11. What is your marital status?
12. What level of education did you reach?
  - a. elementary
  - b. high school
  - c. Further education, training (please specify)
13. Where did you go to school?
  - a. elementary
  - b. high school
  - c. post-secondary education, training (please specify)

### Early experiences

14. Before starting Kindergarten, did your child go to any of:
  - a. preschool
  - b. daycare
  - c. Strong Start Centre, Family Place, Family Resource Centre
  - d. faith-based program
  - e. parks and recreational programs (e.g. swimming, gymnastics, art, music, dance, library story time).
  - f. other (please describe)
15. When did your child begin to walk?      talk?
16. What language(s) does your child understand? speak?
17. What are your child's interests?
18. What are your child's favourite activities?
19. Who does your child play with?
20. Did your child look forward to starting school? Why or why not?
21. Does your child like being read to? By who?
22. Are there any family activities your child takes part in? (TV viewing, faith/religious activities, outings, shopping, movies or concerts/music/other)
23. Are there any household tasks your child takes part in? (cooking, cleaning, other)

## SCHOOL PERSONNEL QUESTIONNAIRE

1. What is your current position?
2. Where were you born? Date of birth:
3. What is your gender?
4. What is your ethnicity?
  - a. Aboriginal origins (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Metis)
  - b. East Asian origins (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)
  - c. Eastern and Southern European origins (e.g., Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Italian, Greek, Spanish)
  - d. Northern and Western European origins (e.g., British, Scottish, German, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Dutch)
  - e. South Asian origins (e.g., East Indian, Punjabi, Pakistani)
  - f. Southeast Asian origins (e.g., Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese)
  - g. Other (please list):
5. What language(s) do you speak? understand?
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - a. High school diploma
  - b. Some post-secondary
  - c. Diploma/Certificate
  - d. Bachelor degree
  - e. Postgraduate degree
7. Have you received any information or training about child development? What kind?
  - a. no specialized training,
  - b. workshops
  - c. some college courses but no degree
  - d. BA/BS (bachelor's)
  - e. advanced degree
8. Have you received any information or training about working with young children?
  - a. no specialized training,
  - b. workshops
  - c. some college courses but no degree
  - d. Bachelor degree
  - e. advanced degree
9. Are your training and experience specifically with early childhood or with the whole elementary range?
10. Have you received any information or training about working with cultural and linguistic diversity?
  - a. no specialized training,
  - b. workshops
  - c. some college courses but no degree
  - d. BA/BS (bachelor's)
  - e. advanced degree
11. How many years have you worked in education?

12. How many years have you worked with young children? (Grade 1 and younger)
13. How many years have you worked with culturally and linguistically diverse students?  
families?
14. How long have you worked at this school?
15. Is your position at this school full time or if not, how many days do you usually work at this school each week?
16. How many children from the following cultural heritage groups do you currently work with at this school?
 

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Aboriginal origins (e.g., First Nations, Inuit, Metis)</li> <li>b. African origins</li> <li>c. Central and South American origins</li> <li>d. East Asian origins (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean)</li> <li>e. Eastern and Southern European origins (e.g., Polish, Russian, Ukrainian, Italian, Greek, Spanish)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>f. Northern and Western European origins (e.g., British, Scottish, German, Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, Dutch)</li> <li>g. South Asian origins (e.g., East Indian, Punjabi, Pakistani)</li> <li>h. Southeast Asian origins (e.g., Filipino, Thai, Vietnamese)</li> <li>i. Other (please list):</li> </ol>
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------
17. How many children in the following language groups do you currently work with at this school?
 

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Arabic</li> <li>b. Cantonese</li> <li>c. English</li> <li>d. Farsi</li> <li>e. French</li> <li>f. Hindi</li> <li>g. Korean</li> <li>h. Mandarin</li> <li>i. Portuguese</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>j. Punjabi</li> <li>k. Russian</li> <li>l. Spanish</li> <li>m. Tagalog</li> <li>n. Urdu</li> <li>o. Vietnamese</li> <li>p. Other</li> </ol>
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## COMMUNITY MEMBER QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Where were you born? Date of birth:
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your race/ethnic background?
4. What language(s) do you speak? understand?
5. Do you have children?
6. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
  - f. High school diploma
  - g. Some post-secondary
  - h. Diploma/Certificate
  - i. Bachelor degree
  - j. Postgraduate degree
7. Have you received any information or training about child development? What kind?
  - a. no specialized training
  - b. workshops
  - c. some college courses but no degree
  - d. bachelor's degree
  - e. advanced degree
8. Have you received any information or training about working with young children as distinct from your information about child development? Please give examples.
  - a. no specialized training
  - b. workshops
  - c. some college courses but no degree
  - d. bachelor's degree
  - e. advanced degree
9. Have you received any information or training about working with cultural and linguistic diversity? Please give examples.
  - a. no specialized training
  - b. workshops
  - c. some college courses but no degree
  - d. BA/BS (bachelor's)
  - e. advanced degree
10. How many years have you worked in community projects/services?
11. Do you have specialized training and experience specifically with early childhood amongst other things?
12. What other training and experience are you using in your current work?
13. How many years have you worked with culturally and linguistically diverse children? families?
14. How long have you worked in this community?
15. How much contact do you have with XXX school personnel?
  - a. \_\_\_\_ days/week
  - b. \_\_\_\_ days /month



16. What type of contact do you have? (e.g. supervisory, formal liaison, volunteer, legal, social services, etc.)
- a.
17. How much contact do you have with culturally and linguistically diverse families from XXX School?
- a. \_\_\_\_ days/week
- b. \_\_\_\_ days /month
18. What type of contact do you have with these families? (e.g. supervisory, formal liaison, volunteer, legal, social services, etc.)
19. How many children from the following cultural heritage groups do you work with in the community in a typical month? year?
- |                                 |                     |
|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| a. Aboriginal                   | e. East Asian       |
| b. African                      | f. Mexican          |
| c. Central and Eastern European | g. South Asian      |
| d. Central and South American   | h. Western European |
20. How many children in the following language groups do you work with in the community?
- |               |               |
|---------------|---------------|
| a. Arabic     | j. Punjabi    |
| b. Cantonese  | k. Russian    |
| c. English    | l. Spanish    |
| d. Farsi      | m. Tagalog    |
| e. French     | n. Urdu       |
| f. Hindi      | o. Vietnamese |
| g. Korean     | p. Other      |
| h. Mandarin   |               |
| i. Portuguese |               |

## Appendix F Individual Interview Protocol

### Interview Protocol

1. What do children need to get a good start when they enter kindergarten?
2. How do families (parents, siblings, other relatives in the home) help young children to develop well? (prompt contexts: physical, social, emotional, language, literacy, cognitive)
3. What should parents do to help their children learn?
4. What is the most important thing/ what are important things parents should teach their children?
5. What are some of the things parents expect of their young children by the time they start kindergarten? (prompts: self-care – dress, eat, toilet; academic skills – know numbers, letters; language skills (English? home language?) literacy skills; social relationships – friends, manners) Other things you can think of?
6. How do other adults (e.g. neighbours, preschool teachers, faith/religious leaders,) in the community help young children to develop well?
7. What should the school do to help children as they start kindergarten?
8. What is the purpose of kindergarten? What is the most important thing for children to learn in kindergarten? (prompt for play; academic skills, social skills, independence)
9. How successful is your child going to be at school? Is your child ready for K?  
**(Family)**  
How successful are your culturally and linguistically diverse children at school?  
**(School & Community)**
10. How important is it for children to learn about their culture? home language? English?
11. Who should help children learn about their culture? home language? What kinds of things can/should they do to help children learn?
12. How can families, schools, and communities work together to enhance children's learning and development?

## Appendix G Family Participant Demographic Information

ID	Gender	Age Group	Countries of Origin	Ethnic Identity	Home Language	Education Level	Occupation	Marital Status	Spouse Age Group	Spouse Occupation	K Child Gender	Sibling school level
F1	F	30s	Philippines	SEA	Tagalog, Spanish, English	F - computer technology	janitorial	D/S	40s	----	F	
F2	F	30s	Canada	NWE	English	F - college	bookkeeper, receptionist	M/C	30s	warehouse worker, tow truck driver	M	preschool
F3	M	30s	Fiji	SEA	English, Hindi	Further -	warehouse worker, tow truck driver	M/C	30s	bookkeeper, receptionist	M	preschool
F4	F	40s	India	SA	Bengali, English	HS	domestic, volunteer, family daycare	M/C	40s	PhD student (NZ) elec. Engineering	M	high school
F5	F	20s	Philippines	SEA	English, Tagalog	F- graduate computer programming	housewife	M/C	30s	driveway sealer	M	
F6	F	40s	Philippines	SEA	Tagalog, English	Elementary	unemployed	M/C	40s	unemployed	F	preschool
F7	F	30s	China	EA	Chinese , English	Further	realtor	M/C	40s	business	M	
F8	F	40s	Philippines	SEA	English, Tagalog	Further - CGA	accountant	M/C	30s	comptroller	F	preschool
F9	M	30s	Vietnam	EA	English, Chinese, Cantonese	Further - technical institute	IT technician	M/C	30s	housewife	M	primary
F10	M	30s	India	SEA	Punjabi, English	HS (Gr 8)	cleaning	M/C	20s	cook	F	primary

Note. Information extracted from NVivo Database

SEA=Southeast Asian; NWE = North, West European; SA = South Asian; SEA = Southeast Asian; EA = East Asian; F = Further education

M/C = Married/common-law; D/S = Divorced/single

## Appendix H School Participant Demographic Information

ID	Gender	Age Grp	Ethnic Origins	Home Language	Educ-ation Level	Occupation	CD Train-ing	Young. Children Training	School Level taught	CALD Train-ing	Years Worked in Education	Years Worked w.Young. Children	Years Worked CALD Families	Years at School
S1	F	40s	NWE	English	BD	Grade 1 teacher	BD	BD	EC	C	16-20	5-10	15-20	13
S2	F	30s	ESE	English, Portuguese	BD	Grade 1 teacher	BD	BD	El	BD	10-15	10-15	10-15	10
S3	F	50s	NWE	English	PGD	Area Counsellor	BD	D/C	EC, EL	W, C	21-25	21-25	5-10	8
S4	F	50s	ESE, NWE	English	PGD	K teacher	AD	BD	El	W	26-30	10-15	>20	14
S5	F	50s	NWE	English, German	BD	K teacher	W, BD	W, BD	EC	---	26-30	26-30	>20	7
S6	F	30s	NWE	English	BD, D/C	K/1 Teacher	AD	AD	EC	BD	10-15	10-15	10-15	2
S7	F	60s	NWE	English	PGD	K Resource Teacher	BD	W	EC	W	>30	26-30	15-20	14
S8	F	50s	NWE	English	HS	OAA	No	No	El	---	16-20	16-20	15-20	6
S9	M	50s	NWE	English	PGD	Principal	AD	BD	El	AD	>30	10-15	>20	1
S10	F	30s	NWE	English	PGD	SLP	AD	AD	El	C	<5	<5	<5	2
S11	F	40s	NWE	English	BD	Teacher Librarian	C	W	El	W	<5	<5	<5	1
S12	F	50s	EA	English, Chinese	PGD	MCL worker	W,C	W,C	EC, El	W,C	21-25	21-25	>20	22
S13	F	50s	SEA	Filipino, English	BD	MCL worker	W,C	W,C	ECE	W,C	16-20	10-15	<5	3
S14	M	40s	NWE	English	PS, D/C	YF Worker	W,C	W,C	El	W,C	21-25	5-10	5-10	6

Note. Information extracted from NVivo Database

NWE = North, West European; ESE = East, South European; SEA = Southeast Asian; OAA = Office administrative assistant; SLP = speech & language pathologist; MCL = multicultural liaison; YF = Youth & Family; PS = Some post secondary; D/C = Diploma/Certificate; BD = Bachelor degree; PD = Postgraduate degree; W = workshop training; C = college courses; CD = Child development; EC –Early Childhood; El = Elementary

## Appendix I Community Participant Demographic Information

ID	Gender	Age Group	Ethnic Origins	Home Language	Education Level	Occupation	CD training	Young Children Training	CALD training	Years with community projects	Years with CALD Families	Years in community
C1	F	50s	NWE	English	PS, D/C	Director Child & Family Services	W, C	W, C	W, C	21-25	>20	5-10
C2	F	40s	NWE	English	Diploma	Child Care Coordinator	C	C	---	18	16-20	15-20
C3	F	50s	NWE, ESE	English	BD	Community Strategist	W, BD	C, W, BD	W, C	>30	>20	>20
C4	M	50s	NWE	English	PGD	Director Community Services	BD	BD	BD	16-20	>20	15-20
C5	F	30s	SA	Punjabi, English	BD	Director Preschool	W, C	C	W, C	10-15	10-15	10-15
C6	F	50s	ESE	English, Spanish	Diploma	Family Development Coordinator	W	W	W	>30	>20	15-20
C7	F	50s	SA	Hindi/Urdu Punjabi, English	BD	Family Programs Coordinator	W, C	W, C	W	21-25	>20	>20
C8	F	50s	NWE	English	BD	Community Nurse	W	W	W	33	>20	>20
C9	F	40s	ESE	English	PGD	Community Librarian	W	W, C	W	<5	<5	<5
C10	F	50s	ESE,NWE	English	PS,D/C	Strong Start Facilitator	W,C	W,C	W, C	21-25	16-20	15-20

*Note. Information extracted from NVivo Database*

*NWE = North, West European; ESE = East, South European; SA = South Asian; PS = Some post secondary; D/C = Diploma/Certificate; BD = Bachelor degree; PD = Postgraduate degree; W = workshop training; C = college course*