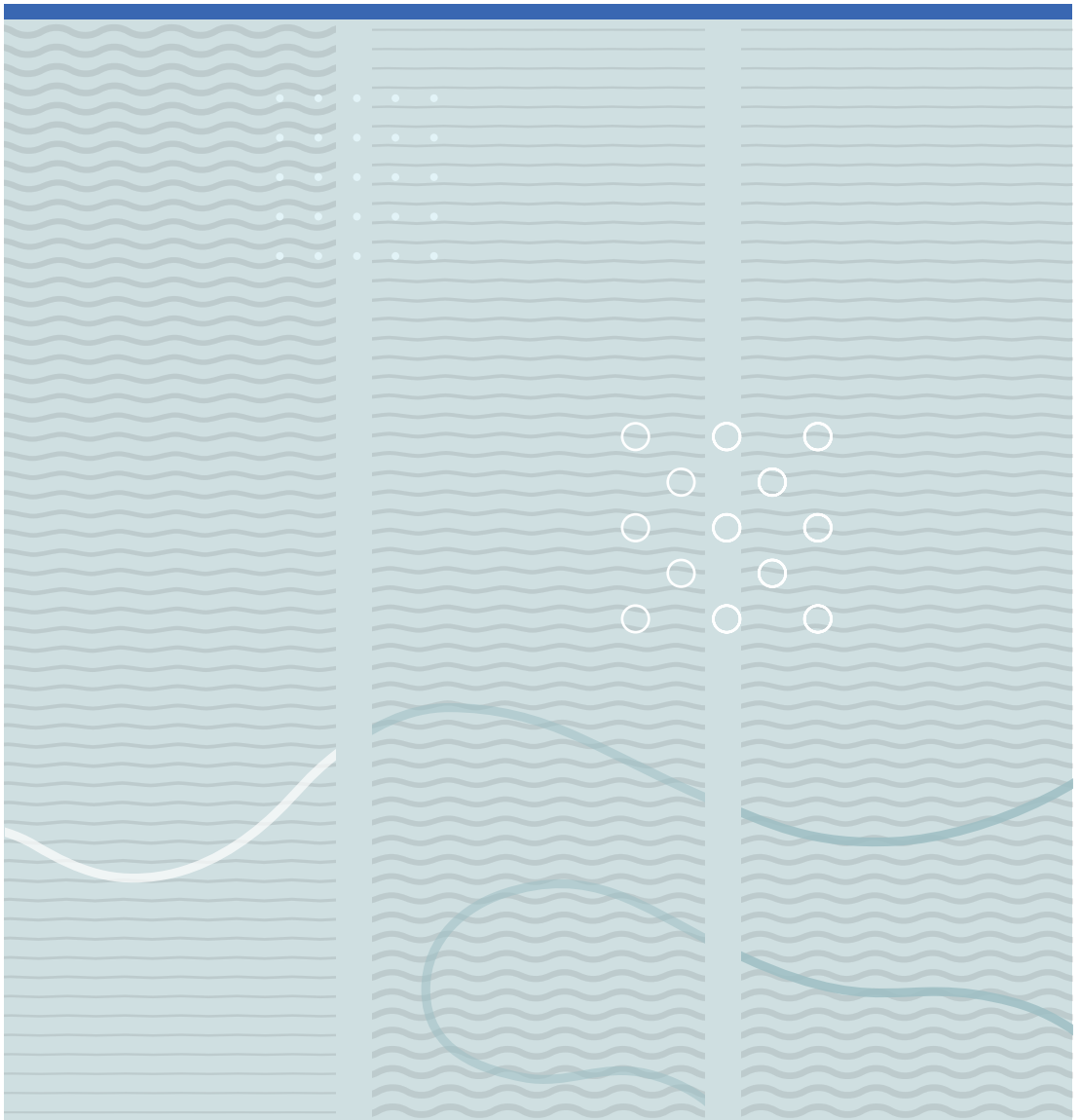


Helga Norheim

Partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care





Helga Norheim

**Partnerships between parents with immigrant
backgrounds and professionals in early
childhood education and care**

A PhD dissertation in
**Pedagogical Resources and Learning Processes in Kindergarten
and School**

© Helga Norheim, 2022

Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science
University of South-Eastern Norway
Horten, 2022

Doctoral dissertations at the University of South-Eastern Norway no. 117

ISSN: 2535-5244 (print)

ISSN: 2535-5252 (online)

ISBN: 978-82-7206-641-2 (print)

ISBN: 978-82-7206-642-9 (online)



This publication is licensed with a Creative Commons license. You may copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format. You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. Complete

license terms at <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/deed.en>

Print: University of South-Eastern Norway

Acknowledgements

During the process of writing this thesis, several people have contributed in different ways and should be thanked. First, I would like to extend my warmest thanks to my two supervisors, Thomas Moser and Martine Broekhuizen, for their continuous support, endless patience, and careful reading of the text, and for sharing their substantial knowledge with me.

Next, many thanks to all my colleagues from the ISOTIS research team, who have provided a stimulating environment and opened my mind to international and comparative perspectives within the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC). Especial thanks to Ryanne Francot, Bodine Romijn, Pinar Kolançali, Hande Erdem, Ayça Alaylı, and all the other Ph.D. students on the project for all the fun and support they have provided throughout the process.

I would like to thank The Norwegian National Research School in Teacher Education (NAFOL), which has provided excellent courses and seminars as well as a supportive environment for doctoral students. Especial thanks to Hilde Salte, Elise Vike Johannesen, and Tonje Myrebøe – you have been invaluable!

Within my own institution, I would like to thank the Ph.D. program and all the wonderful Ph.D. students. Especial thanks to Evi Petersen for sharing this experience with me and for her support throughout every step of the process.

I would like to thank Clara Barata and Ratib Lekhal for their thorough readings and thoughtful comments regarding my work for the midterm and final seminars.

This project would not have been possible without the participants, and I would like to thank every single one of the parents and professionals who shared their experiences with us. Also, huge thanks to all the interviewers who worked on the project.

Finally, I would like to thank my wonderful family and friends for their continuous support and patience throughout the process. Last, but most importantly, I would like to thank Erik Eliassen, who has been pivotal throughout the process. Thank you for challenging me, for listening, and for supporting me.

Abstract

Keywords: Partnership, early childhood education and care (ECEC), parents, professionals, immigrant backgrounds.

This thesis investigates barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care (ECEC). It is article based and comprises three articles and an extended abstract. The extended abstract presents the overarching aim of the thesis, clarifies relevant concepts, and provides an update on the literature within the field. It further presents the theoretical framework, methodological approach, and results before, lastly, discussing the overall contribution of the thesis to the field.

Paper I synthesizes previous empirical research on partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC in an overview review. The review included 25 articles published between 2000 and 2018. This study identified barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC related to language, asymmetrical power relations, and cultural differences and disagreements. Regarding the facilitators, the paper suggests that partnerships can be promoted through hiring bilingual staff, using translators, translating materials into the home languages of the families, translanguaging, allotting enough time for communication, and showing respect and patience.

Paper II investigates the views of ECEC professionals from four European countries regarding their partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms, and reveals whether their partnership views can be predicted by the professionals' characteristics and practices. The paper draws on survey data from the European research project *Inclusive education and social support to tackle inequalities in society* (ISOTIS). The findings indicate that the professionals have quite positive views on several aspects of their partnerships with the parents, with high levels of reciprocal relations and low levels of problem-oriented contact and hierarchical relations. However, they also reveal a potential for more shared beliefs with the parents.

Lastly, several aspects of partnerships were predicted by professionals' multicultural practices, by their diversity-related self-efficacy, and by their own cultural backgrounds.

Paper III investigates views on partnerships among parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC and their beliefs about multicultural and multilingual education. The paper draws on survey data from Norway from the ISOTIS project. The findings indicate that both parents and professionals have positive partnership views, although parents report significantly more positive views than the professionals do. For multicultural practices, the findings suggest that both parents and professionals value practices promoting cultural diversity. However, when it comes to multilingual beliefs, parents and professionals reveal large variations in beliefs, with significant differences between the groups.

Overall, this thesis identifies that barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC are mainly found within the content areas of language, power dynamics, and multiculturalism. It further shows how barriers and facilitators for partnerships are largely interconnected and highly context-sensitive as they, for example, may differ between immigrant groups and countries. Lastly, several of the identified facilitators are found among professionals' practices, which emphasizes the significance of their role and their opportunities to facilitate partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds.

List of papers

Paper I

Norheim, H., & Moser, T. (2020). Barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC: A review based on empirical research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 28(6), 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2020.1836582>

Paper II

Norheim, H., Broekhuizen, M., Moser, T., & Pastori, G. (under review). ECEC professionals' views on partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms in four European countries. Submitted to *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*.

Paper III

Norheim, H., Moser, T., & Broekhuizen, M. (resubmitted with minor revisions). Partnerships in multicultural ECEC settings in Norway – Perspectives from parents and professionals. Submitted to *Nordic Early Childhood Educational Research*.

Unpublished papers (ii and iii) are omitted from online edition

List of tables

Table 1. Research aim and questions	22
Table 2. Methodological approach	27
Table 3. Overview of partnership items for parents and professionals in Papers II and III	32

List of figures

Figure 1. Research context for the empirical studies (Papers II & III)	10
Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development	14
Figure 3. Visualization of Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence	18
Figure 4. Illustration of the triangulating approach used in the project	24
Figure 5. Integrated results from the thesis	47

Abbreviations

ECEC	Early childhood education and care
EFA	Exploratory factor analysis
ISCED	International Standard Classification of Education
ISOTIS	Inclusive education and social support to tackle inequalities in society
MANOVA	Multivariate analysis of variance
MCAR	Missing completely at random
RCT	Randomized controlled trial
SES	Socioeconomic status

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	I
Abstract.....	III
List of papers	V
List of tables	VI
List of figures	VI
Abbreviations	VII
1 Introduction	1
1.1 Overarching aim and investigative questions.....	2
1.2 Concepts.....	3
1.2.1 Partnership.....	3
1.2.2 Barriers and facilitators.....	3
1.2.3 Parents	3
1.2.4 Immigrant backgrounds	4
1.2.5 ECEC professionals	4
1.3 Literature update	5
1.4 Research context.....	9
1.5 Structure of the thesis.....	10
2 Theoretical framework	13
2.1 The bioecological model of human development	13
2.2 Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influence.....	17
3 Methods.....	21
3.1 Methodological approach and research design.....	21
3.2 Data collection.....	27
3.2.1 Reviewing the literature (Paper I).....	28
3.2.2 The ISOTIS survey of professionals (Papers II & III).....	28
3.2.3 The ISOTIS parent structured interview study (Paper III)	29
3.3 Study samples	29
3.3.1 Previous research (Paper I)	30
3.3.2 Survey data from ECEC professionals from four European countries (Paper II) ..	30

3.3.3	Questionnaire data from Norwegian parents and professionals (Paper III).....	30
3.4	Measures and concepts	31
3.5	Analysis.....	35
3.5.1	Paper I	35
3.5.2	Paper II	35
3.5.3	Paper III	36
3.5.4	Missing data	36
3.6	Research credibility	37
3.6.1	Validity and trustworthiness of the methods applied	37
3.6.2	Reliability and coherence of the results.....	38
3.6.3	Generalizability and transferability and application of the results.....	38
3.7	Methodological limitations	39
3.7.1	Paper I	39
3.7.2	Papers II and III.....	40
3.8	Research ethics.....	40
4	Results	43
4.1	Paper I	43
4.2	Paper II	44
4.3	Paper III	45
4.4	Integrated results	46
5	Discussion	53
5.1	Discussion of the main findings.....	53
5.1.1	Barriers and facilitators related to language	54
5.1.2	Barriers and facilitators related to power dynamics	57
5.1.3	Barriers and facilitators related to multiculturalism.....	59
5.2	Discussion of the methods	60
5.2.1	Investigating partnerships.....	61
5.2.2	Study samples and generalizability	62
5.2.3	Less reciprocity among professionals with immigrant backgrounds?	63
5.3	Implications for theory and practice	64

5.4 Conclusions..... 66

References..... 69

Paper I..... 87

Paper II.....107

Paper III.....137

Part I

Extended abstract

1 Introduction

Raising a child is arguably one of life's greatest challenges. In its essence, this is the task parents and professionals in early childhood education and care (ECEC) take on together during the years a child spends in ECEC. Although the main responsibility for a child's upbringing lies with the parents, the number of hours many children spend in ECEC makes ECEC professionals an important part of their learning and caregiving environment. Today, 95% of all 4-year-olds in Europe attend ECEC, and the attendance rates for children aged 3 years and younger are also increasing and are currently at 34% (European Commission, 2019). For these children, the opportunities for well-being, play, participation, care, learning, and development are pivotal – both in their home and ECEC environments. However, for each context to function at its best, coherence between the contexts and the bridging of possible gaps are needed (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Moreover, the relationship between parents and professionals has been linked to children's well-being and learning (Aghallaj et al., 2020; Epstein, 2018) and has been established as an important characteristic of ECEC quality (Wolf, 2018).

As European societies are becoming increasingly multicultural due to immigration, both from outside and within Europe (European Commission, 2020), an increasing number of children grow up navigating between different cultures and languages. Persistent educational disadvantages are found among children with immigrant backgrounds in Europe (Passaretta & Skopek, 2018), and these children will often need to acquire two or more sets of linguistic and cultural skills. For these children, the ability of their parents and the professionals in the ECEC setting to work together for their best interests is vital for their opportunities to successfully acquire the linguistic and cultural competences they need. However, previous international research indicates that although parents with immigrant backgrounds often express a strong wish to create partnerships with professionals, they often experience a lack of opportunities to do so (Hachfeld et al., 2016; Shor, 2007; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Van Laere et al., 2018; Yahya, 2016), or even experience not feeling welcome in their children's ECEC (Ashraf, 2019). Furthermore, the roles and expectations regarding the relationships and communication within the ECEC setting vary (Conus & Fahrni, 2019; Hujala et al., 2009), and

the understanding of parental involvement also differs in ECEC curriculums across countries (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). As several factors may increase the gaps between the home and ECEC environments for children with immigrant backgrounds, there is a need to identify the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC in order to provide high-quality ECEC for all children.

1.1 Overarching aim and investigative questions

The overarching aim of this thesis is *to gain knowledge about the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC*. Throughout the project, the following questions guided the different phases of each paper:

- What do we know from the international research literature? (Paper I)
- How do professionals in four European countries view their partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds, and can the qualities of their partnerships be predicted by who they are and what they do? (Paper II)
- How do Norwegian parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals view their partnerships, and do they have similar educational beliefs? (Paper III)

These questions were further operationalized and specified as research questions for each paper (see Chapter 3, Table 2). The overarching aim is approached through different methods and perspectives in the three articles and the extended abstract. Two of the papers (Papers II & III) draw on data from the collaborative European research project *Inclusive education and social support to tackle inequalities in society (ISOTIS)*, which was funded by the European Union¹ and aimed to combat educational inequalities and increase inclusiveness.

¹ This project received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program under grant agreement No. 727069.

1.2 Concepts

To approach the aim of this thesis, the use of several concepts needs to be clarified.

1.2.1 Partnership

The concept of a *partnership* is the main investigative topic in this thesis and describes a specific type of relationship between parents and professionals, in which both parts acknowledge their shared responsibility for the child's well-being, learning, and development (Simon & Epstein, 2001) and work closely together to create coherence between the child's two main environments. A partnership is built on mutual trust and open communication and assumes that both parts acknowledge each other as equal (Epstein, 2018). Using the term *partnership* extends the focus from the body of literature on parental involvement (Simon & Epstein, 2001), which solely focuses on what parents do to get involved in their child's education, and emphasizes both parents' and professionals' roles as co-constructors of the child's learning and caregiving environment. Thus, although many relationships between parents and professionals will not be partnerships, I have chosen to focus on partnerships as a desired goal – describing equal, trusting relationships, where parents and professionals are able to communicate openly and solve problems together for the best interest of the child.

1.2.2 Barriers and facilitators

This thesis focuses specifically on *barriers* and *facilitators* for partnerships, aiming to identify factors that can either contribute to, or are found to hinder, parents' and professionals' ability to create and maintain partnerships. These factors are often sorted into the *experiences*, *philosophies*, and *practices* of parents and professionals (Epstein, 2018), which, in turn, may be influenced on many levels, including by individual or organizational factors or by broader societal and historical ones (this will be further elaborated on in Chapter 2).

1.2.3 Parents

This thesis uses the term *parents* to describe a child's most significant caregivers, filling the *social role of parents* for a child. This understanding of parenthood focuses on the function of the caregivers and their ability to provide for and nurture the child and may be labeled as *the*

best interest of the child position concerning parenthood (Steinbock, 2006). In modern society, many children grow up outside a traditional nuclear family, and for some children, the social role of a parent may be filled by a mother and a stepfather, a father and a stepmother, two mothers or two fathers, grandparents, or other family members, foster parents, or other guardians. In this thesis, all these constellations fall under the term *parents*, as the focus is on the relationships between the *caregivers from the child's home* and *the caregivers from ECEC*.

1.2.4 Immigrant backgrounds

Parents with *immigrant backgrounds* are not a homogenous group, and several factors may influence how immigrants interact with and become integrated in a society, as well as how they acquire the language of the host country (Kolancali & Melhuish, 2019). These factors may include the reasons for migrating, the country of origin, and the demographic characteristics and educational level of the immigrant group in the host country, as well as the host country's culture and policies. This thesis focuses on parents with immigrant backgrounds from non-western countries and includes data from both first- and second-generation immigrants. Although this is still a diverse group, they have in common a recent family history of migrating from one country to another and navigating between cultures and languages in their everyday lives.

1.2.5 ECEC professionals

ECEC professionals are used to describe both the staff working directly with the children in ECEC as well as their managers. Although the managers might not work directly with children, they often interact with parents at the organizational level and facilitate interactions between parents and staff through their leadership and organizational policies. The staff working directly with children are a diverse group, comprising teachers with a university degree and vocational workers, as well as assistants with no formal education related to working with children. Furthermore, the requirements to work with children differ between the countries investigated in this thesis. However, the ECEC professionals are all in positions where communication with parents in some form is a part of their jobs.

1.3 Literature update

A body of literature has been written on educational partnerships in general and their importance in terms of ECEC quality (see e.g., Råde, 2020), but this thesis focuses specifically on partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. A thorough review of the research literature on this topic is provided in Paper I, which gives a systematic overview of what we know from empirical research within this landscape. However, the research literature on the topic in Paper I focused on the period between 2000 and 2018, and some new studies have been published since then. Therefore, an updated search was conducted using the same procedure, search terms, and inclusion criteria as in Paper I. The only difference was the time period, which in the updated search was set from 2019 to 2021. This updated search initially resulted in 78 articles, of which 17 were considered relevant after an initial reading of their titles and abstracts. After a full reading of these articles, eight were found to fit the inclusion criteria. This procedure was followed by the ancestry approach (see Krumsvik, 2016), that is, searching for relevant studies in the reference lists of the included articles, and lastly by hand searches, which resulted in two additional relevant studies. In total, ten new studies were found to be relevant for the topic of this thesis, and all were observed to be of sufficient quality according to the criteria defined in Paper I.

The majority of the studies were based on qualitative data (90%), and most of them had been conducted in Europe (60%), followed by the US (30%), with one study having been conducted in Israel. Most of the studies focused on the perspectives of both parents and professionals (60%), followed by those concentrating only on professionals (30%), and just one study only included parents' perspectives. This may represent a slight shift from the focus found in the literature review included in Paper I, where all the studies included data from parents in some form.

In line with the findings from Paper I, most of the studies (90%) mention language skills with regard to the parents as a barrier for partnerships (Anderstaf et al., 2021; Ashraf, 2019; Conus & Fahrni, 2019; Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019; Khalfaoui et al., 2020; Lazzari et al., 2020; McWayne et al., 2021; Smith, 2020; Sønsthagen, 2020). The studies point to parents' lack of skills in terms of the language of the host country (Ashraf, 2019; Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar,

2019), and one study finds that parents are required to possess sufficient language skills in order to even be acknowledged as significant stakeholders by the professionals (Sønsthagen, 2020). Some parents also lacked confidence in their communication skills (Ashraf, 2019; Conus & Fahrni, 2019), which led them to feel uncomfortable in interactions with the professionals. McWayne et al. (2021) point to the presence of several language groups as a challenge, although the pilot program in their study comprised professionals who were able to translate materials and to interpret at meetings. Using translators and deciphering written communication has often been suggested to aid language barriers, but some studies indicate that this approach may also lead to misunderstandings (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019; Smith, 2020). The professionals' experiences with translators were mixed as they sometimes felt that such interactions with the interpreters lacked detail and accuracy (Smith, 2020). Furthermore, although interpreters may translate words, they may lack knowledge about the socio-cultural context of what they are translating, leading to misunderstandings (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019). This led to professionals concluding that translation alone does not sufficiently overcome language barriers (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019). In addition, some professionals used creative strategies to communicate with the parents, such as "pantomime, illustration, personal examples, physical movements, pictures, and explanations" (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019, p. 191). Other professionals deliberately used non-verbal communication (eye contact, smiling, nodding, using gestures) and even attempted to speak the parents' language (in this case Spanish) in order to mediate the language barriers (Smith, 2020, p. 122). Written communication is also mentioned as a widely used practice, where professionals write down information, updates, or memos for the parents (Smith, 2020). This may provide opportunities for translation and, furthermore, give parents the opportunity to read the messages when they have the time to do so. On the other side, this approach is only available to parents who possess sufficient literacy skills and may be less interactive than verbal communication. However, it should be noted that the lack of language skills in relation to the language of the host context is not always seen as a barrier. In one study, dialogue where both parts acknowledged each other as equals and shared a strong common vision helped to minimize the hurdles created by language barriers (Khalfaoui et al., 2020).

Another topic emerging from the recent studies was the differences in terms of the expectations regarding the relationship between the parents and the professionals, which relates to the power asymmetry found in the review (Paper I). In a Swiss study, the professionals worked based on the principle that “no news is good news,” whereas the parents with immigrant backgrounds, on the other hand, felt reluctant to bother the professionals (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). This phenomenon led to a lack of interactions between the parents and professionals, but the professionals appeared to be unaware of how their philosophies affected the parents and felt that the parents should take more initiative (Conus & Fahrni, 2019). A study in the United Kingdom revealed similar findings; many parents did not feel welcome in ECEC, but when professionals were asked to discuss why parents might not feel welcome, they quickly explained this by referring to characteristics among the parents, such as a lack of confidence (Ashraf, 2019). However, a study of a program for parental engagement demonstrated that professionals’ practices were related to parental self-efficacy, as well as their participation (Haymes et al., 2019), suggesting that professionals’ practices matter with regard to parents’ confidence and experiences in their relationships with ECEC. Sønsthagen (2020) points to uncommunicated social codes as barriers for the parents in their everyday interactions and relates this to a power imbalance between the parts. One example from this study was a mother’s tendency not to follow her child upstairs and into the classroom, which was the expected norm. This led the professionals to speculate on whether she was always in a hurry or did not want to speak to them (Sønsthagen, 2020). As parents with immigrant backgrounds may have different experiences of ECEC, or even lack experience regarding it, such uncommunicated social norms may pose a barrier. Acknowledging the power imbalance between parents and professionals often found in ECEC (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Vandebroek et al., 2009; Van Laere et al., 2018), where professionals are seen as experts, McWayne et al. (2021) used a pilot program to explore what happens if the power structure is disrupted, shifting the approach from “school-to-home” to “home-to-school.” As a result of this shift, the more typical approach, with a substantial flow of information from professionals to parents, was challenged, and the experiential knowledge of the parents was requested and acknowledged. In this study, valuing each person’s type of expertise in a non-hierarchical relationship was crucial (McWayne et al., 2021). The pilot

program incorporated informal practices, such as coffee hours and information sheets from the home, into ECEC, which valued this knowledge obtained from the children's parents and created a more culturally inclusive program. The experiences of the implementation of this pilot program suggest that shared goals need to be developed in joint efforts between the stakeholders.

In line with the findings from the review (Paper I), cultural differences also emerge as a topic in the literature from the last three years. In a Swedish study (Anderstaf et al., 2021), the dilemmas arising from differences in values between cultures were explored. One example from this study entailed a boy who had dressed up and was wearing a dress when his father picked him up from ECEC. His father disliked this and told the professionals that he did not want him to wear that ever again (Anderstaf et al., 2021). For the professionals, this may raise a tension between their mandate to create a shared cultural heritage for the children and, on the other hand, to respect and promote cultural diversity. Similarly, professionals in Israel experienced cultural tensions in their communication with immigrant parents (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019). One example from this study entailed a mother telling the professional, "If the child is causing you trouble, lock him in the bathroom" (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019, p. 194). This specific professional expressed frustration regarding the group of parents with immigrant backgrounds, and although she acknowledged that there were several reasons for the challenges the parents faced, she had a problem-oriented view of their relationship. Another professional from the same study, however, succeeded in creating a shared set of behavioral rules across contexts with the parents by taking into account the different cultures present in her child group (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019). This professional viewed the parents as her main source of knowledge about the children's behavior and communicated openly with them to promote belonging and social integration and create trust. Relatedly, another study emphasized the importance of creating a shared goal and purpose between parents and professionals to provide the best education for the children (Khalifaoui et al., 2020). This study further revealed that drawing on the strengths of the families was an effective way to create partnerships.

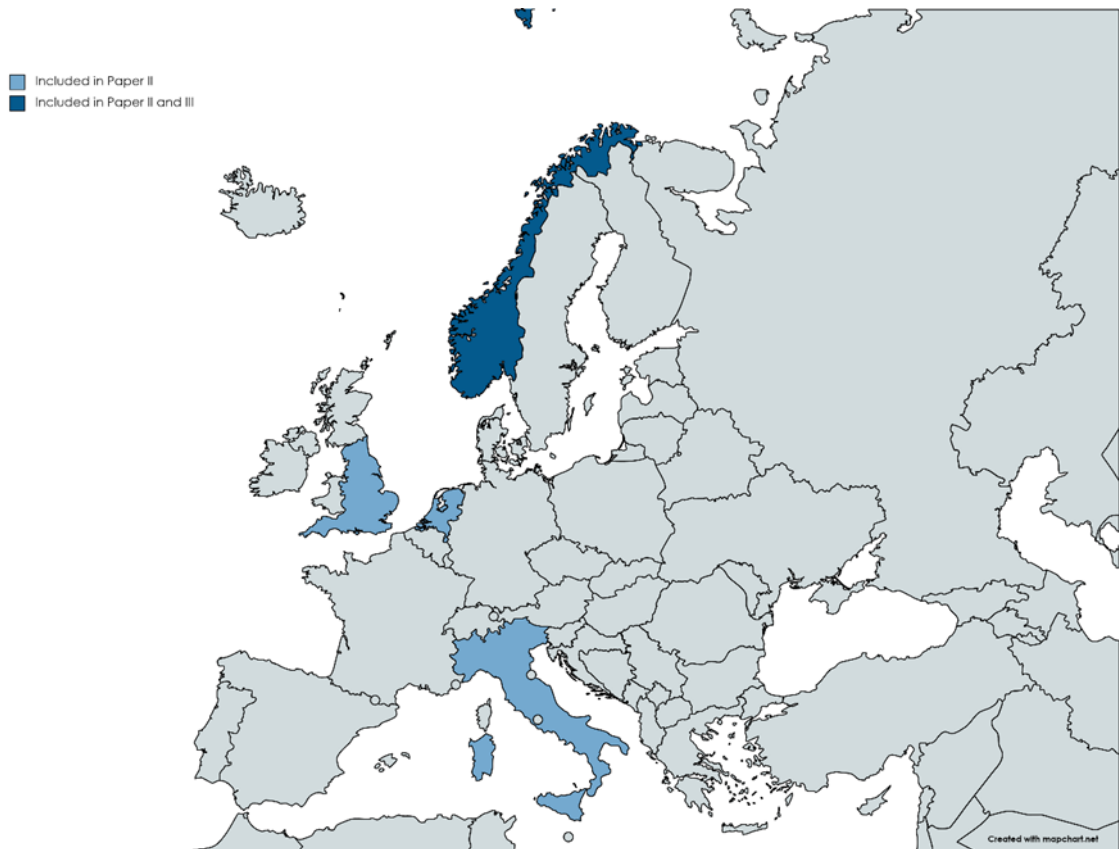
In sum, the updated literature search shows some new tendencies. First, with 10 new studies included from the last 3 years, compared to the 25 studies included in the review covering the period 2000–2018, there appears to be an increased focus on this topic. Next, there is a slight increase in studies focusing on professionals' perspectives, as well as an increase in studies from the European context. In line with the findings from the previous review (Paper I), the majority of studies still draw on qualitative data. The topics raised in the research from the last three years are largely similar to those found in the previous literature review, and explore barriers and facilitators related to language, power dynamics, and multiculturalism. However, challenges related to the power imbalance between parents and professionals appear to have gained increased acknowledgement among researchers (see e.g., Conus & Fahrni, 2019; Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019; Sønsthagen, 2020), and new ways of approaching and including parents in ECEC are being explored (see e.g., McWayne et al., 2021).

1.4 Research context

This thesis investigates different research contexts as part of the project. As ECEC varies greatly in different parts of the world (Cochran, 2011) in terms of content, quality, and accessibility, it is often challenging to directly compare practices and experiences. However, this does not mean that it is not useful to learn from research-based knowledge from other contexts. Thus, for the purpose of gaining knowledge through reviewing previous research on the topic (Paper I), an international context was chosen. In addition to variation in ECEC provisions, there are large variations between countries and continents in relation to the history of and reasons for migration, as well as the host countries' will and abilities concerning integrating immigrants into society. Thus, for Paper II, which included quantitative empirical data, four specific European countries (England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands) were selected. Integration policies have been linked to the amount of contact between the majority population and immigrants in Europe (Green et al., 2020). Aiming to represent relevant variation, the countries chosen for Paper II varied substantially, from a rather strong assimilationist orientation in the Netherlands to a strong multicultural orientation in England (Geddes & Scholten, 2016). In Paper III, the research context was further narrowed down to the Norwegian context. This provided the opportunity to deepen the discussion on parents'

and professionals' experiences and philosophies regarding partnerships and to situate them in terms of country-specific policies.

Figure 1. Research context for the empirical studies (Papers II & III)



1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis comprises two parts: an extended abstract (Part I) and three papers (Part II). Part I consists of five chapters. In Chapter 1, the theme and aim of this thesis are introduced, followed by an update on the research literature on the topic. In Chapter 2, the theoretical framework of the thesis will be presented. Chapter 3 describes the methodological approach and research design, justifies choices made during the process, and reflects upon the research credibility and methodological limitations of the studies. Chapter 4 summarizes the results from each paper and presents the integrated results for the thesis as a whole. In Chapter 5, the results from the thesis are discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and previous

research. Finally, methodological issues will be discussed, and implications for theory and practice will be pointed out.

2 Theoretical framework

Theory can be understood as a lens through which the world, or a phenomenon, is seen. For the purpose of this thesis, two main theoretical perspectives serve as such lenses and have influenced both the research process and the interpretations of the phenomenon of partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. Research processes are always influenced by ontological and epistemological assumptions. Ontologically, this Ph.D. draws on the notion that “what matters for behaviour and development is the environment as it is *perceived* rather than as it may exist in ‘objective’ reality” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Epistemologically, this implies that reality cannot be observed directly but must be “be inferred from patterns of activity as these are expressed in both verbal and non-verbal behaviour, particularly in the activities, roles and relations in which the person engages” (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). In the current thesis, ECEC partnerships were inferred, as parents and professionals *perceive* them. This chapter will provide an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the project. The main theoretical perspectives applied in this thesis are Bronfenbrenner’s bioecological model of human development and Epstein’s theory of overlapping spheres of influence. This chapter will describe the main components of these theoretical perspectives and will ground the thesis within these theories.

2.1 The bioecological model of human development

The ecology of human development can be described as the study of *human development in context* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Children develop through interaction with their environments (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), and as an increasing number of young children spend a large amount of time in ECEC, their families and ECEC constitute two of their main social environments. Bronfenbrenner (1979) describes the ecological environment as a set of Russian dolls, with the individual in the center surrounded by a set of nested structures. For human development, the *dyad* or the two-person system is seen as the basic and innermost system (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). A child’s main dyadic relationships will often be with their mother(s) and/or father(s). However, for a dyad to provide an effective developmental context for a child, a caregiver is often dependent on other dyadic relationships, such as their partner or other members of their social support system. Thus, triads and larger interpersonal

structures also play an important role in terms of the innermost system's ability to function. As such, an ecological perspective on human development emphasizes interconnections between the social settings surrounding the individual, through participation, communication, and the exchange of information (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

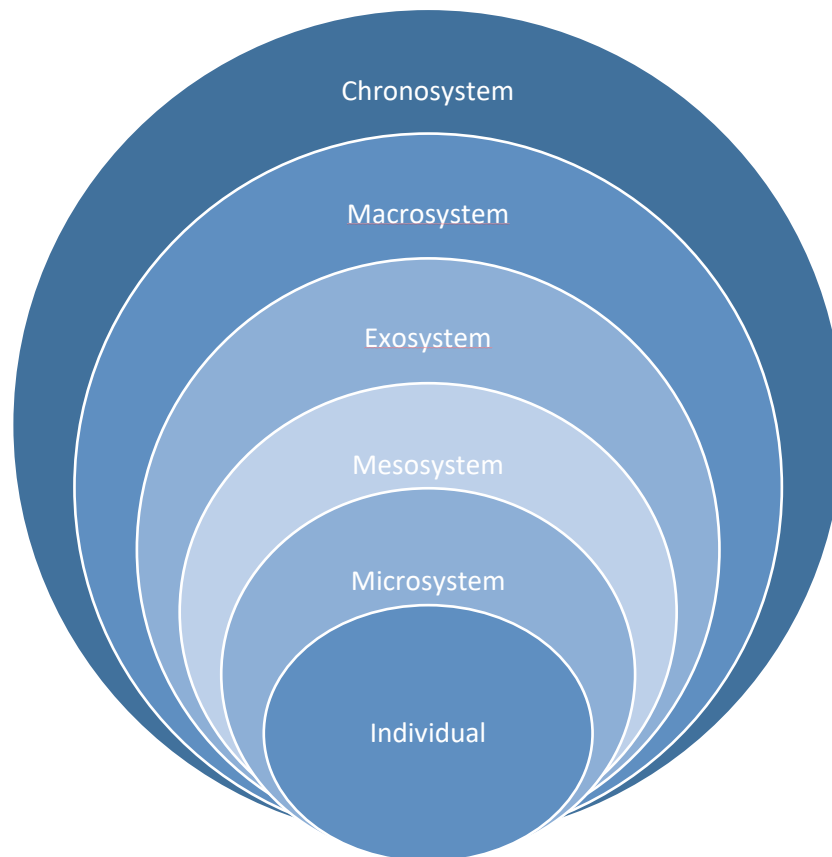


Figure 2. Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development

In the bioecological model of human development (see Figure 2), the innermost circle surrounding the individual, the immediate, most proximal setting, constitutes the *microsystem* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Examples of microsystems are the family, school, or ECEC context. Next, the interconnections between individuals' immediate surroundings are described as *mesosystems*, whereas the interconnections between the immediate surroundings and other contexts, which, in turn, affect the individual's immediate surroundings (microsystem), are referred to as *exosystems* (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The

relationship between parents and ECEC is a mesosystem, whereas the relationship between parents and their workplace will typically be an exosystem for a child. Surrounding these systems is the *macrosystem*, which refers to the culture or subculture within which the abovementioned systems are embedded. The macrosystem comprises the overarching ideologies and patterns of organization in a society (Bronfenbrenner, 1988). Lastly, Bronfenbrenner added the chronosystem, which refers to changes over time that affect a child's life (Bronfenbrenner, 1986, 1988). Changes over time may take place on an individual level or through changes in the individual's immediate surroundings (microsystem), such as a child's transition from ECEC to school, which, in turn, may cause changes in the relationships between parents and teachers (mesosystem). However, Bronfenbrenner (1988) also emphasizes that historical and contextual changes over time, outside the immediate surroundings of the individual, may be developmentally influential. Examples may be political conflicts and wars, policy changes, or changes in how children are viewed within a society.

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), the structures of micro-, meso-, exo-, and macrosystems can be found across societies and cultures. However, although the systems can be found across cultures, their ecological properties may vary. Examples may be the role that religion and religious institutions play in a culture or whether children primarily spend their first years within the family or in ECEC institutions, which vary across societies. Bronfenbrenner (1979) observed the systems in a variety of different cultures and found significant differences in their forms and content. One example was the coherence and harmony that children from the Soviet Union experienced between their family values and those of the society, as opposed to in the US, where Bronfenbrenner argued that children's socialization processes were interrupted by a lack of contact with adults (Hayes et al., 2017), such as parents or teachers. This led him to conclude that "a more homogenous set of standards" (Bronfenbrenner & Condry, 1970, p. 229) between children's different socialization contexts eased their transition to society (Hayes et al., 2017). Another example that Bronfenbrenner mentions is that even though children in both the US and France attend ECEC or school, the nature of the relationship between the parents and these institutions differs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979); whereas parental involvement is traditionally highly encouraged in the US (Ma et al., 2016), French ECEC has traditionally held parents "at arm's length" (Cochran, 2011, p. 75). In addition

to differences across societies and cultures, the nature of these relationships will differ even within a society, depending on socioeconomic background, and as such, the systems embedded in a macrosystem (micro, meso, exo) may serve as representations of the macrosystem's values and beliefs (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). As this thesis focuses on cross-cultural meso-level partnerships, these perspectives are highly relevant. When parents and professionals have different cultural backgrounds, their expectations of the nature of the relationship within the mesosystem may differ. As the same applies for how macro-level values and beliefs are represented within their microsystems, the child may in turn meet quite different expectations in the different contexts, leading to an increased need for a high-functioning mesosystem in order to create coherence between the contexts. The systems within Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model are defined by referring to each other, emphasizing their interconnectedness, which is pivotal in understanding how immigrant families are embedded in larger social structures (Paat, 2013). Furthermore, chronosystem events may also play a significant role for immigrant parents, as wars or conflicts might be reasons for migration and may affect their interactions at all system levels.

The bioecological model of human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) serves several purposes within this project. First, it places the relationship between parents and ECEC in the mesosystem and recognizes it as an important system in terms of a child's opportunities to develop. Second, it draws attention to its interconnectedness with the surrounding systems, and how individual factors, organizational factors, policies, and culture are inherently interconnected with the mesosystem. Third, the theory emphasizes how the ecological properties of the systems may vary across cultures, which may, in turn, lead to parents and professionals with different cultural backgrounds entering the mesosystem with different expectations towards each other. When the microsystems constituting the mesosystem have differing cultural backgrounds, the need to bridge the microsystems may be even greater, regarding both each microsystem and the child, as the child then navigates not only between microsystems but also between value and belief systems (macro) comprising differing ecological properties.

Bronfenbrenner's theoretical perspective underpins all three articles in this thesis. In Paper I, Bronfenbrenner's theory serves as a lens through which the previous research is read, and it is also highly present in the research literature itself. This is evident as several studies draw on the theory explicitly, but it is also evident through the number of studies investigating Head Start programs, which were originally designed by Bronfenbrenner himself in cooperation with Edward Zigler (Hayes et al., 2017). For Papers II and III, which draw on data from the ISOTIS project, Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model has influenced the development of the questionnaires used in this thesis, as it was the overarching framework drawn on for the project. In addition, Bronfenbrenner's emphasis on contextual factors is increasingly present in the papers, as Paper I uses a global context, Paper II approaches the European context, and Paper III narrows the context down to a national level (Norway).

2.2 Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence

Epstein's (2018) theory of overlapping spheres of influence draws on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development and emphasizes that children develop in different environments (i.e., the family, ECEC, the community), which can either be pulled together or pushed apart by three main forces. The first force is time, regarding which Epstein (2018) states that the most overlap can be found in the lowest age groups of children attending educational institutions and decreases as the children's age increases. As ECEC partnerships involve very young children, this is theoretically the age where the spheres of influence should overlap the most, though there will never be a full overlap. However, it may also be a time in children's lives where the need for overlap is the greatest, as very young children are more dependent on their caregivers while they are still developing object permanence and are in their early days of language acquisition. Next, the overlap is affected by the *experiences*, *philosophy*, and *practices* of the family, as well as the ECEC² setting (Epstein, 2018). These may influence each other interchangeably; if a teacher adopts new practices to involve parents,

² Epstein focuses on the relationships between families and school but frequently includes preschool in her examples, which is included under the term ECEC as it is used in this thesis. For the purpose of this thesis, I will use the term ECEC when describing her theory, although her approach is broader and also includes higher school levels.

this may give parents new experiences, which may also influence their philosophies or practices, in turn, resulting in new experiences for the teacher.

Figure 3. Visualization of Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence



Children are central to Epstein's (2018) theory, as their interests and well-being are assumed to be the purpose of both parents' and professionals' interactions with each other. They also influence, and are influenced by, their interactions with both their parents and the ECEC professionals. Furthermore, Epstein (2018) differentiates between connections at the institutional level, between family and ECEC, and at the individual level, between parents and professionals. These two levels of connections are closely related, and are influenced by both time and the experiences, philosophies, and practices of the family/parents and ECEC/professionals. Epstein's (2018) research suggests that greater overlap between the two spheres builds connections, prevents conflicts, empowers parents to support their child's learning, and benefits children's learning outcomes.

Epstein (2018) differentiates between *separate*, *shared*, and *sequential responsibilities* between family and ECEC. *Separate responsibilities* often entail inherent incompatibility or even conflicts between the parties where their goals are seen as different, and working towards such goals is seen as being best achieved independently of each other. On the opposite end, *shared responsibilities* emphasize communication and cooperation between the family and ECEC and assumes that ECEC and families share certain goals and responsibilities concerning a child's education. *Sequential responsibilities* emphasize the different roles family and ECEC hold throughout different stages of a child's development (i.e., parents prepare children for entering educational institutions). From a partnership perspective, shared responsibilities are the desirable mindset and may pull the spheres of influence together. In contrast, professionals and parents who view their responsibilities separately may experience a more problem-orientated relationship, and it may give them fewer opportunities to create a foundation of shared beliefs about the child. In this thesis, the measures for partnership aspects (see Chapter 3) draw on both separate, shared, and sequential responsibilities at the item level.

Within this Ph.D. project, the theory of overlapping spheres of influence (Epstein, 2018) emphasizes that partnerships can be created and maintained by establishing greater overlap between a child's different social contexts, although a full overlap is neither possible nor the desired goal. The theory also underlines the role of both parents and professionals in either pulling the spheres of influence together or pushing them apart, emphasizing their shared responsibilities with regard to the child. Furthermore, it specifies that time, as well as the experiences, philosophies, and practices of the parents and the professionals may constitute barriers or facilitators for partnerships. For the purpose of this thesis, barriers and facilitators for partnerships are used to describe experiences, philosophies, or practices among parents and professionals that are found to either push the two overlapping spheres of influence apart or pull them together. These forces have been influential for the project, and they are present in all three papers in different ways. Paper I adopts the broadest approach and focuses on experiences, philosophies, and practices, involving studies on parents, professionals, and children. Paper II explores the relationship between professionals' experiences, philosophies,

and practices. Lastly, Paper III mainly focuses on experiences and philosophies, but includes perspectives from both parents and professionals.

The two theories framing this thesis have complementing purposes within the project. Whereas Bronfenbrenner's bioecological model of human development places the mesosystem within the broader societal context, emphasizing that cultural differences may be found at all system levels, Epstein's theory of overlapping spheres of influence provides perspectives that are more specific for mesosystems comprising parents and professionals in ECEC. Thus, combining these perspectives provides a theoretical lens similar to a binocular lens, with opportunities to view the phenomenon of partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC both up close and from afar, interchangeably.

3 Methods

This Ph.D. project aims to gain knowledge about the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. This aim is approached through three papers, in which different perspectives, practices, and contexts are investigated. This chapter describes the methodological approach for the project as a whole and presents how the three papers build on and complement each other. The data, procedures, and analysis will be described, and choices made in the process will be justified. Lastly, the chapter will discuss issues regarding the research credibility and limitations of the study, as well as the ethical considerations made during the process.

3.1 Methodological approach and research design

Studying partnerships between parents and professionals in ECEC entails studying a mesosystem (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), which is a highly contextualized and complex task. As the overarching research aim requires different perspectives and, thus, different sources of data in order to be fully investigated, the aim was guided by three questions (see Table 1). These questions were investigated through three project phases, which resulted in the three papers included in this dissertation. The questions were further operationalized into specific research questions in each paper (see Table 2).

Table 1. Research aim and questions

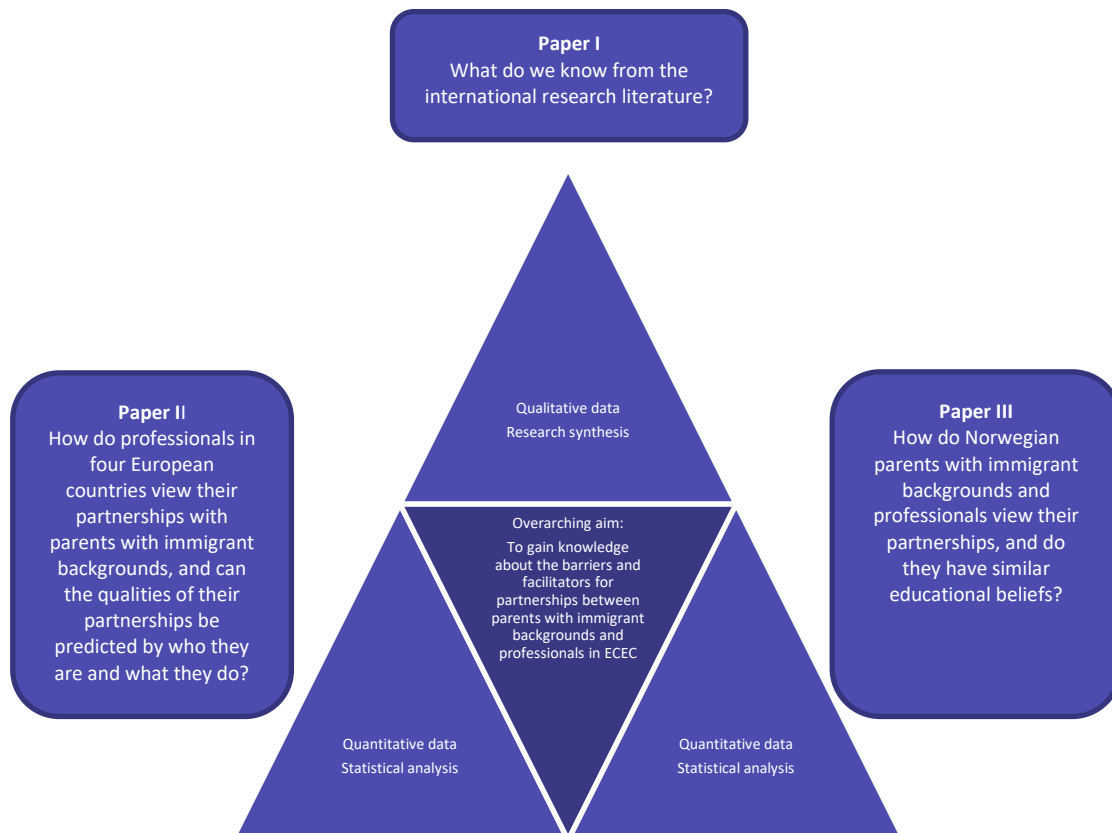
Overarching aim	To gain knowledge about the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC
Question, Phase I	<i>What do we know from the international research literature?</i>
Question, Phase II	<i>How do professionals in four European countries view their partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds, and can the qualities of their partnerships be predicted by who they are and what they do?</i>
Question, Phase III	<i>How do Norwegian parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals view their partnerships, and do they have similar educational beliefs?</i>

To approach these questions, a sequential multiphase design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) with the triangulation of data and analysis through a series of studies (Johnson et al., 2007) was chosen for this Ph.D. project. A multiphase design allows for flexibility in methodological design elements when approaching a set of interconnected research questions (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Sequential designs allow for the implementation of data collection and analysis in different phases (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) and provide the opportunity to draw on findings from previous phases throughout the investigation. This approach was considered suitable for the project as several interconnected questions (see Table 1) needed to be investigated in order to approach the overarching aim. Lastly, the design comprised the triangulation of data and analysis, which can be understood as an “inquiry that focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative empirical materials in a single study or a series of studies” and “reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (Denzin, 2012, p. 82). This approach may add

rigor and richness to an inquiry by combining methodological practices, perspectives, and observers (Denzin, 2012; Flick, 2018), which was pivotal in order to gain insight into the topic of this project.

Regarding the type of data, the project comprises both qualitative and quantitative data, although perhaps not in the most traditional sense as the qualitative strand in this project is a literature review. Qualitative and quantitative data can be understood as designed to describe reality using either words or numbers (Greene et al., 1989). Drawing on this understanding, the dissertation comprises both qualitative (Paper I) and quantitative (Papers II & III) strands. Rather than triangulating data in each single study, the dissertation triangulates between data in the series of studies included, following the above-described sequential multiphase design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011); *Paper I* synthesizes previous research literature on the topic in an overview review, *Paper II* draws on quantitative data from European ECEC professionals working in multicultural contexts, and *Paper III* utilizes quantitative data from Norwegian parents and professionals in multicultural ECEC settings.

Figure 4. Illustration of the triangulating approach used in the project



Using qualitative and quantitative data in a research project does not necessarily imply equal importance between the different strands (Gobo, 2008). In this Ph.D. project, the majority of the data are quantitative. However, the first phase of the project (Paper I), including qualitative data, played an important role in shaping the direction, as well as the methodological choices, in the following phases. The first phase revealed that the majority of previous studies on the topic comprised qualitative data (see Paper I), which may be especially suitable for exploration and may provide nuances in a field of study (Choy, 2014). These were important reasons for the choice of a qualitative and thematic approach for the first phase of the project, as research on partnerships in multicultural ECEC settings is an emerging field of study. However, when comparing groups and investigating relationships between different

phenomena, quantitative methods appear to be superior (Choy, 2014). As such, the skewed methodological focus within the previous research on this topic had resulted in knowledge gaps (see Paper I), which governed the direction of the next phases of the project that utilized quantitative data.

The flexible methodological approach applied in the project is founded in the epistemological belief that different research questions need different methodological approaches, as all approaches entail advantages and disadvantages (Choy, 2014; Libarkin & Kurdziel, 2002). Korzybski famously stated that “a map is not the territory” (Gobo, 2008), and the same may be seen to apply to a methodological perspective, as data is not the reality. All data entail representations of reality, and using numbers or words as representations may provide different strengths and weaknesses (Choy, 2014). However, just like a map, data may provide useful insights into a field. Moreover, according to Gobo (2008), systematizing reality entirely, without reducing complexity or facets, is never truly possible. Nevertheless, with systematic and transparent approaches, useful maps may be drawn.

Along with the majority of the previous studies drawing on qualitative data, the first phase of the project further revealed a dominant focus on the perspective of parents (see Paper I). Parents’ experiences and voices are arguably important within this research landscape, but we further found the tendency in the literature to explain barriers for partnerships through parental characteristics and practices (such as low educational backgrounds or low educational involvement). This may be problematic as barriers and facilitators for these relationships may also be found among the characteristics of and practices displayed by professionals. However, the perspectives of professionals, and knowledge about facilitating practices or characteristics among them, are still scarce in the international research literature. This insight shaped the second phase of the project, where this gap was approached by investigating the professionals’ perspectives on partnerships, as well as characteristics and practices among professionals that could potentially predict partnerships (Paper II).

Throughout the project, it became increasingly evident how contextualized the phenomenon of a partnership is, and the fact that it is perhaps even more so for early educational partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals. Parent-

professional partnerships are mesosystems, which are embedded in communities (exosystems), host cultures, and political contexts (macrosystems) and are influenced by specific histories of immigration (chronosystems), and these different system levels are largely intertwined (Aghallaj et al., 2020; Damon & Lerner, 2006). The emergence of contextual factors as a pivotal factor in the project led to the ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) playing an increasingly important role throughout the phases of the research. Results from previous international studies were not necessarily applicable in the European context, and the review of the literature conducted in the first phase indicated that there was a need for more knowledge derived from this context (see Paper I). The second phase of the project further suggested differences within Europe (see Paper II), which led to the last phase narrowing the focus down even further to the Norwegian context. This allowed for the most contextualized paper of the dissertation (Paper III), which takes into account and discusses several macro- and chronosystem factors surrounding partnerships in Norwegian ECEC. Table 2 summarizes the contexts, perspectives, data, and analysis in the project and displays the operationalized research questions for each paper.

Table 2. Methodological approach

Paper	Context	Perspective	Data	Analysis	Research question
Paper I	Global	Parents, professionals, and children	Empirical peer-reviewed studies	Thematic literature synthesis	(1) What are the barriers to and facilitators of the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care?
Paper II	European	Professionals	Quantitative survey data	Descriptive and multivariate analyses	(2) How do ECEC professionals view their partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms? (3) Do ECEC professionals' characteristics and practices predict their views of partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms?
Paper III	National	Parents and professionals	Quantitative survey and structured interview data	Descriptive analyses	(4) How do parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals working in ethnically and culturally diverse ECEC provisions view their partnerships, and what are their beliefs about multicultural and multilingual education?

3.2 Data collection

This Ph.D. project uses three different data sources to investigate the barriers and facilitators for partnerships in multicultural ECEC settings. These include empirical peer-reviewed articles (Paper I), survey data from professionals working in formal and informal education in European countries (Papers II & III) generated by the ISOTIS project (Slot et al., 2018), and questionnaire data from parents with immigrant backgrounds from the ISOTIS parent structured interview study (Paper III) (Broekhuizen et al., 2018). I participated actively in the procedures of developing the survey and the interview guide and in the collection of the data

used in my Ph.D. project for both of the abovementioned sub-studies, as well as with regard to the literature used in the review, which was conducted independently.

3.2.1 Reviewing the literature (Paper I)

The process of selecting previous empirical research for the overview review of partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC (Paper I) started with initial scoping searches. These helped to guide the process of determining search terms and inclusion criteria for the review. When these were determined, the studies were collected in three stages during the fall of 2018. First, systematic searches in Academic Search Premier and ERIC were conducted, followed by an ancestry approach (Krumsvik, 2016), where the references from all the papers identified in the first stage were investigated. Lastly, hand searches were conducted. Through these three search stages, 27 relevant articles about partnerships between parents and professionals in multicultural ECEC settings were identified. Next, all the papers that met the inclusion criteria were assessed in terms of quality by both authors independently, resulting in 25 articles to be included in the review.

3.2.2 The ISOTIS survey of professionals (Papers II & III)

The data for the survey of professionals working in formal and informal education in European countries were collected for the ISOTIS project in ten different European countries in 2018 (Slot et al., 2018). The questionnaire was developed by the ISOTIS team and piloted in all ten countries. This resulted in the set of questions included, which could be answered in about 30–45 minutes. The survey was translated into ten languages and adapted slightly to each national context, as the countries have policy differences, for example, relating to educational requirements for teachers. The survey was distributed online through the LimeSurvey software program, completed by the professionals themselves, and hosted by a secure server at Utrecht University. Participants were recruited from the same sites as the parents in the ISOTIS parent structured interview study (for details, see Slot et al., 2018). Recruitment followed two main strategies: professionals were approached either by contacting the school or center leader directly, or by contacting a director responsible for multiple schools or centers. Professionals were then individually asked to participate and, if they agreed, gave

their informed consent. Furthermore, all participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

3.2.3 The ISOTIS parent structured interview study (Paper III)

The data for the ISOTIS parent structured interview study were collected in ten European countries in 2018. The questionnaire for this study was developed by the ISOTIS team and draws on Bronfenbrenner's bioecological theory of human development (Broekhuizen et al., 2018). The study targeted four groups of parents: parents from low-SES native-born families, parents with Roma backgrounds, and parents with either Turkish or Maghrebian immigrant backgrounds. These four groups were chosen as they experience persistent educational disadvantages (Broekhuizen et al., 2018). Furthermore, immigrants with Turkish and Maghrebian backgrounds have settled across Europe, and this provides an opportunity to study groups of similar origin within different contexts (Broekhuizen et al., 2018). The study focuses on parents of children aged 3–6 years old or 9–11 years old in order to investigate the perspectives of parents who have some experience with either ECEC or schooling with regard to their children. The participants were recruited using several strategies, including contacting them through schools or centers, sports or social clubs, religious institutions, mediators, organizations, networks of the interviewers, and social media channels. The interviews were conducted face-to-face, preferably at a neutral location (e.g., a school or a community center), by trained interviewers who had similar backgrounds as the parents, and in the language of the parents' choice. The answers provided by the parents were reported by the interviewers through the online LimeSurvey software program, and the data were stored on a secure server at Utrecht University. The interviews lasted for approximately one hour, and the participants were given a small gift or gift card with the value of €5–€10 as an incentive to participate. All the participants gave their informed consent and were informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time and without giving a reason.

3.3 Study samples

In order to answer the different research questions, the three different studies were informed by different samples.

3.3.1 Previous research (Paper I)

The sample of studies included in the overview review consisted of 25 empirical peer-reviewed studies about partnerships in multicultural ECEC settings. All the articles were written in English and published in the period 2000–2018. The studies represented a variety of methodological approaches and included qualitative studies (60%), quantitative studies (33%), and mixed methods studies (7%). Over half of the studies were conducted in the US (52%), and a little under a third of the studies originated from Europe (28%), with the rest of the studies originating from New Zealand, Australia, Canada, and Israel. The studies investigated the perspectives and practices of parents and professionals, as well as child outcomes.

3.3.2 Survey data from ECEC professionals from four European countries (Paper II)

In Paper II, the analytical sample was drawn from the ISOTIS survey of professionals (Slot et al., 2018) and comprised 130 ECEC professionals from England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands working in classrooms where 25% or more of the children had an ethnic-cultural background different from the majority of the country³. Most of the participants were female (96%), and their mean age was 42 years old. Of the participants, 15% had a non-western background and on average their educational level was between post-secondary non-tertiary education and short-cycle tertiary education (International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED); $M = 4.54$).

3.3.3 Questionnaire data from Norwegian parents and professionals (Paper III)

The analytical sample in *Paper III* comprised questionnaire data from the ISOTIS parents structured interview study (Broekhuizen et al., 2018) and the ISOTIS survey of professionals

³ The professionals included in the sample for Paper II reported working in classrooms with the following proportions of children with a different cultural background: 25% (13.8%), 50% (16.9%), 75% (26.9%), and almost all (42.3%).

(Slot et al., 2018) for the Norwegian context. The sample of parents included parents with Turkish immigrant backgrounds (n = 32) of children aged 3–6 years old and included both first- (78.9%) and second-generation (28.1%) immigrants. Parents with Turkish immigrant backgrounds were sampled in Norway, as they represent one of the first immigrant groups from a non-western country. Moreover, this group has on average low levels of educational attainment, employment, and income (Henriksen, 2007). Most of the participating parents were female (96.9%), and their mean age was 34 years old. The majority of the sample had attained a medium educational level (high school or vocational program level; 59.4%), under a third of the parents had attained a high educational level (bachelor degree or higher; 28.1%), and the rest had attained a low educational level (primary or secondary school level; 12.5%).

The sample of professionals (n = 56) included both ECEC managers (32) and ECEC teachers (24) working in ECEC settings in Norway where 25% or more of the children had an ethnic-cultural background different from Norwegian⁴. The professionals were recruited from the same areas as the parents but were not clustered in the same centers. Only one of the professionals was born outside of Norway. All the managers and the majority of the teachers held a bachelor degree or higher.

3.4 Measures and concepts

Partnerships. Partnerships were a key investigative concept throughout all the papers. Although the papers all draw on the same theoretical approach towards partnerships (see Section 1.2.1 and Chapter 2), the concept is operationalized somewhat differently between the papers in order to investigate the different research questions. The broadest approach was chosen for the purpose of the literature review (Paper I). In the review, a variety of different dimensions of parent-professional partnerships were investigated through including research focusing on the overlapping spheres of influence between ECEC and the home, including research on “involvement, collaboration, communication, engagement and

⁴ The professionals included in the sample for Paper III reported working in ECEC provision with the following proportions of children with a different ethnic-cultural background: 25% (35.1%), 50% (22.8%), 75% (12.3%), and almost all (29.8%).

participation” (Paper I). For the two empirical papers, the most comprehensive approach towards partnerships was adopted for Paper II (see Table 3). Through eight items, we assessed different aspects of partnerships, approaching the extent to which professionals viewed relationships with parents as problem-oriented, reciprocal, hierarchical, or consisting of shared beliefs. For Paper III, we focused specifically on four items, which all had corresponding items in both the parent structured interview study and the survey of professionals. In addition, we included one item that was only answered by parents, regarding their trust in how the teachers work with the children. This item had no corresponding item in the survey of professionals, but we included the item, as parents’ trust in their child’s teacher is a fundamental part of a partnership. Both parents and professionals were asked to respond to the different statements on a 5-point Likert scale with possible responses ranging from (1) “disagree” to (5) “agree.”

Table 3. Overview of partnership items for parents and professionals in Papers II and III

Items for professionals	Items for parents	Paper II	Paper III
	I trust the way my child’s teachers work with the children.		x
I feel that parents understand me ⁵ .	My child’s teachers understand me.		x
I mostly talk to parents when there is a problem ⁶ .	My child’s teachers communicate with me not only when there is a problem.	x	x
I have similar beliefs as the parents about the children’s behavior.	My child’s teachers and I have similar beliefs about my child’s behavior.	x	x
I have similar beliefs as the parents about what the children can achieve.	My child’s teachers and I have similar beliefs about what my child can achieve.	x	x

⁵ This item was not included in Paper II as it did not fit into the factor model.

⁶ For comparison, this scale was recoded to match the positive scale given to the parents in Paper III.

I welcome parents' initiative with regard to contacting me.	x
As a professional, I am responsible for seeking contact with parents.	x
I tell parents that as a professional I know what is best for their child.	x
I make an effort to have informal talks with all parents. (R)	x
The main responsibility for a child's development and learning lies with the professional.	x

Note 1. Possible responses include "disagree" (1), "slightly disagree" (2), "undecided" (3), "slightly agree" (4), and "agree" (5).

Multicultural practices. To assess professionals' multicultural practices (Paper II), we used a 12-item scale, specifically developed for the ISOTIS project. The participants were asked to rate the frequency of certain practices on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "never" (1) to "always" (5) (Slot et al., 2018). The items included integrating different cultural or religious values and practices into their work, such as celebrating a variety of holidays or taking into account religious or cultural nutrition-related practices. They also included implementing different languages in their work and providing materials that represent cultural diversity.

Contact with parents. Professionals were asked to respond to 6 items concerning the frequency of different topics in terms of their contact with parents (Paper II) on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from (1) "(almost) never" to (7) "every day" (Slot et al., 2018). These items included contact about child behavior or development, the child's home situation, or parent support, and ECEC-related or organizational issues.

Diversity-related self-efficacy. Professionals' self-efficacy related to diversity in their classrooms (Paper II) was measured using the diversity-related self-efficacy scale, as previously studied by Romijn et al. (2020). Professionals were asked to respond to items on a

5-point Likert scale where (1) denoted “not at all” and (5) denoted “to a very large degree.” The scale comprised two items concerning the professionals’ ability to “work with children from diverse cultural backgrounds” and to “work with children from diverse linguistic backgrounds.”

Multicultural beliefs. Parents’ and professionals’ multicultural beliefs (Paper III) were assessed using four different statements about multicultural education, which were adapted from the Teacher Cultural Beliefs Scale (Hachfeld et al., 2011) for the ISOTIS parent structured interview study (Broekhuizen et al., 2018) and the survey of professionals (Slot et al., 2018). Parents and professionals were asked to respond to statements concerning sensitivity towards cultural differences, seeing similarities between children from different cultures, and learning to respect other cultures on a 5-point Likert scale, where (1) denoted “disagreement” and (5) denoted “agreement.”

Multilingual beliefs. To assess parents’ and professionals’ beliefs regarding multilingual education (Paper III), they were asked to respond to four statements adapted from the Monolingual Beliefs in Education Scale (Pulinx et al., 2017) for the ISOTIS parent structured interview study (Broekhuizen et al., 2018) and the survey of professionals (Slot et al., 2018). The statements concerned the support multilingual children should receive in relation to their home languages in ECEC, whether they should be allowed to use their home languages in ECEC, whether speaking their home languages in ECEC will result in less sufficient development of the Norwegian language, and whether they should develop a higher level of skills in the Norwegian language than in their home languages. Parents and professionals were asked to respond to the statements on a 5-point Likert scale with possible responses ranging from (1) “disagree” to (5) “agree.”

Educational level. Professionals’ educational level (Paper II) was assessed by asking for their country-specific education levels, which were subsequently classified by using the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) levels for comparability (Eurostat, 2020).

Immigrant background. To assess whether professionals had an immigrant background, we asked whether they themselves were born in a non-western country or had at least one parent who was born in a non-western country. We used Statistics Norway's definition of western countries (Daugstad, 2008), including all the countries in Western Europe (except Turkey), North America, and Oceania. All other countries were coded as non-western.

3.5 Analysis

As described in Section 3.1, several analytical strategies were used to investigate the research questions in this dissertation. All the statistical analysis was conducted using the statistical software package IBM SPSS Statistics 26 (IBM Corp, 2019) for Windows.

3.5.1 Paper I

To investigate the knowledge from previous international research about barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, a thematic synthesis was conducted. Thematic synthesis is an analysis of content across the included studies and may be especially useful when addressing barriers and facilitators (Booth et al., 2016). More specifically, we identified barriers and facilitators for partnerships in all the included articles and coded them into a spreadsheet, with information about each study's research question, theoretical approach, methodological design, and participants (i.e., parents, professionals, and children). The main themes emerged from this initial coding process as some topics were highly present in several studies. Furthermore, the overview provided insights into the type of research lacking in the research literature so far, identifying theoretical and methodological approaches and contexts and participants that were less present in the literature.

3.5.2 Paper II

In Paper II, European professionals' views on their partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms were investigated through descriptive analyses of all the assessed partnership aspects. The partnership aspects were identified using exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and were named *problem-oriented contact*, *shared beliefs*, *reciprocal relations*, and *hierarchical*

relations. These factors were then used for the subsequent analysis of partnerships (for more details, see Paper II). Next, the partnership aspects were analyzed by calculating means and standard deviations, both for the total sample and per country. Next, we conducted a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to investigate whether there were significant differences in partnership views between the countries, using the country as the independent variable and the different partnership aspects as dependent variables. As significant differences were found, we took country differences into account in our further analyses. To investigate the degree to which professionals' practices and characteristics could predict their partnership views, we conducted a multiple regression analysis. We used the partnership aspects as dependent variables and diversity-related self-efficacy, contact with parents, multicultural practices, immigration background, and educational level as independent variables. We further included dummy-coded countries as fixed effects in our regression model to account for the identified differences between the countries in terms of the partnership aspects.

3.5.3 Paper III

For Paper III, descriptive analyses were conducted to investigate the views of Norwegian parents and professionals in multicultural classrooms regarding their partnerships and multicultural and multilingual education, and included calculating means, medians, and standard deviations. Furthermore, to investigate whether there were differences between their views on partnerships and multicultural and multilingual education, we used independent sample Kruskal-Wallis tests.

3.5.4 Missing data

Missing data are "unobserved values that would be meaningful for analysis if observed (...)" (Little & Rubin, 2019) and represent a common problem that needs to be taken care of by researchers (Enders, 2013). For this Ph.D. project, missing data was only a problem for Paper II. To approach the missing data in Paper II, we established the nature of the missingness by conducting Little's (1988) test of missing completely at random (MCAR). As the results of the test provided no indication that the data were not MCAR, we proceeded with multiple

imputation procedures, producing five separate imputed datasets. All the subsequent analyses were then conducted in the imputed datasets, and the results were pooled using Rubin's rule of pooling effect estimates on imputed data (Baraldi & Enders, 2010; Heymans & Eekhout, 2019; Rubin, 1987).

3.6 Research credibility

Three major epistemological concepts are usually applied to assess the generation of scientific knowledge, namely validity, reliability, and generalizability (Sousa, 2014). However, research quality should be assessed with reference to the paradigm, epistemology, and discipline to which a study adheres (Morrow, 2005; Sousa, 2014). For research drawing on qualitative data, Sousa (2014) suggests emphasizing the related notions of the trustworthiness of the methods and the coherence of the results, as well as their transferability and application, as appropriate epistemological concepts. Thus, as this Ph.D. project comprises both qualitative and quantitative strands, the credibility of the research will be assessed using the abovementioned notions interchangeably for the papers drawing on qualitative and quantitative data.

3.6.1 Validity and trustworthiness of the methods applied

Validity in quantitative research refers to how well a measure represents the intended variable, and it is related to the qualitative notion of the trustworthiness of the methods applied (Sousa, 2014). Both notions are concerned with the problem of whether a conclusion is drawn based on data and analysis that are relevant to answering the research question. The validity and trustworthiness of the applied methods were approached through several measures in the research process. For the literature review (Paper I), avoiding selection bias was important to ensure the trustworthiness of the applied methods (see Booth et al., 2016), and a systematic and transparent approach was therefore adopted. We selected the studies included in the review through predetermined databases, search terms, and inclusion criteria, and we included information about our search results. Furthermore, all the relevant studies were assessed based on quality by both authors independently, using predetermined quality criteria. For Papers II and III, a main validity concern surrounded the self-reported nature of the data, which may be susceptible to social desirability bias. However, we found substantial

variation in the responses (i.e., responses in both the lower and higher ranges of the scales), which supports the validity of the data. In order to increase the validity of the data obtained from the parents, interviews were conducted face-to-face, which gave participants the opportunity to ask for clarifications or even use languages interchangeably. Furthermore, for more sensitive questions, parents were always given the opportunity to fill out the items themselves.

3.6.2 Reliability and coherence of the results

Within quantitative research, reliability refers to the consistency of a measure (Carrig & Hoyle, 2011), and within qualitative frameworks, it is relevant to assess the related notion of the coherence of the results (Sousa, 2014). According to Sousa (2014), coherent results respond to a research question in a way that explicitly arises from the data. Several steps were taken throughout the study to ensure the reliability and coherence of the results. For Paper I, the themes identified in the review were presented thematically, with citations providing information about the coverage of a theme or specific finding in the reviewed literature. In Paper II, we investigated the internal consistency of the partnership scales through Cronbach's alpha for all scales comprising three or more items and through Pearson's correlation for two-item scales. We further accounted for country-specific differences in the partnership scale by using countries as dummy-coded fixed effects in our regression model. In Paper III, the participants were all from the Norwegian context, and cross-context reliability was therefore not a problem. Due to the small sample sizes, we chose a simpler analytical design, using only descriptive analyses, and investigated mean level differences on an item level. Thus, the measures were not used as scales, but as single items.

3.6.3 Generalizability and transferability and application of the results

As multicultural partnerships in ECEC are highly context-sensitive (see Papers I–III), generalization to the total population has not been the focus of this project. However, some knowledge appears to have transferable value across contexts, such as promising strategies to overcome linguistic barriers faced by parents and professionals in many contexts (see Paper I). For Papers II and III, we find several statistically significant effects, and this statistical

significance indicates that the effects, or an effect that is at least as strong, are unlikely to occur at random (Boslaugh, 2012). Thus, the statistically significant findings in these studies are very likely (> 95%) to represent actual effects in the populations they represent, based on the assumption that the samples are randomly selected.

3.7 Methodological limitations

This Ph.D. project has several methodological limitations that need to be taken into account when interpreting the results.

3.7.1 Paper I

For Paper I, the limitations mainly belong to a family of biases in reviews that are generally referred to as “dissemination- and publication-related bias” (Booth et al., 2016) and reviewer-related biases. The first methodological limitation was the inclusion of studies written in English only, which may give a skewed picture of the research literature on the topic and represent a language bias. Arguably, a truly multilingual approach would have been preferable, but it would have required a large international team and was not feasible within the timeframe of the project. Furthermore, literature reviews are always to some extent susceptible to publication bias, as the submission and acceptance of papers may differ among researchers, reviewers, and editors based on the direction or results of a study (Booth et al., 2016). Lastly, although systematic reviews often aim towards objectivity, literature reviews are always at risk of reviewer effects (Booth et al., 2016). In literature reviews, even systematic ones, our “perspectives, preferences and propensities” will always be reflected to some extent in the review (Sandelowski, 2008, p. 105). Thus, Sandelowski (2008) argues that reviewers should aim for “disciplined subjectivity,” with the explicit and transparent selection and analysis of studies and the open communication of the limitations and situatedness of the review. This was approached by several strategies. First, both authors were involved in scoping searches and in determining the relevant databases, search terms, and inclusion criteria. Furthermore, both authors read and assessed the quality of all the identified studies independently. Lastly, we tried to minimize possible reviewer effects by transparently

disseminating the process of selecting the included studies and through thoroughly referencing the coverage of the themes emerging from the reviewed studies.

3.7.2 Papers II and III

For Papers II and III, there are several methodological limitations relating to the data. The self-reported nature of the survey data from the professionals (see Section 3.4.1) as well as the small sample sizes are limitations that need to be taken into account when interpreting the results of these studies. In Paper III, the data from the parents structured interview study were collected through face-to-face interviewers. Thus, these data may be susceptible to interviewer effects, as participants may expect certain responses to be more socially desirable to the interviewer, which may lead to social desirability bias (Krumpal, 2013). Krumpal (2013) suggests that characteristics of the interviewer, such as gender and background, may influence responses. Several measures were taken in the data collection process in order to minimize this effect. The interviewers were recruited to have the same gender and background as the participants and were trained to give neutral responses towards all the answers provided by the participants. The shared background among the interviewers and the participants gave the participants the opportunity to use their preferred language or even use languages interchangeably throughout the interviews. The interviewers further offered the parents the chance to fill out their responses to more sensitive items themselves. Furthermore, as the data are observational and non-experimental, we cannot establish causality. Lastly, educational partnerships have been operationalized in several different ways in previous literature and may differ across cultures and ECEC traditions (Hujala et al., 2009). Thus, the items used to investigate partnerships in the project are non-exhaustive and do not cover all the aspects of an educational partnership (for further elaboration, see Section 5.2).

3.8 Research ethics

Ethical research considerations have been an integral part of the process throughout the project. Research ethics refers to the values and norms that regulate scientific activities and can be understood as “scientific moral in practice” (NESH, 2016). Educational research often includes human participants, and collecting data where humans are involved requires

particular ethical considerations from the researcher. In Norway, research within the field of education is regulated both by law (Forskningsetikkloven, 2017) and the guidelines of ethical committees provided by the the National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and the Humanities (NESH, 2016). Yet, researchers commonly face difficult situations that demand ethical reflection, and sometimes even ethical dilemmas (Israel & Hay, 2006). According to the NESH (2016), one such dilemma may comprise “weighing society’s need for new knowledge against the possible strain imposed on people involved and other parties affected.” Within this project, a possible strain lies in how minority groups are included and described in the research, which has been a central ethical consideration throughout the process of this thesis. The NESH (2016) further states that “researchers have a special responsibility to respect the interests of vulnerable groups throughout the entire research process,” and the immigrant population is often considered to be a vulnerable group within research (McLaughlin & Alfaro-Velcamp, 2015). Through this project, I have strived to approach this topic in a way that both preserves society’s need for knowledge, on the one hand, while being sensitive in terms of how I present the groups that I investigate, on the other. Although conducting research that includes potentially vulnerable groups requires ethical responsibility, seeking knowledge within this field can also be considered an ethical commitment, as knowledge about partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC may play a pivotal role in ensuring all children have equal educational opportunities.

Involving parents with immigrant backgrounds has required several ethical considerations, and these have been a part of both the data collection process and the dissemination in each paper, as well as the extended abstract. First, the voices of parents with immigrant backgrounds have been sought through structured interviews within the project, aiming to create knowledge that can contribute to more inclusive practices. In order to include the perspectives of parents who may not possess the Norwegian language skills to complete, or be comfortable with, an interview in Norwegian, we recruited interviewers with the same backgrounds as the participants, who interviewed them in the language of their choice. These parents’ experiences and perspectives are pivotal to understanding how professionals can facilitate partnerships with these parents to the benefit of them and their children.

Furthermore, one goal has been to present the findings in a nuanced way that is research-based and avoids stereotyping. One challenge within the previous literature is that a substantial number of studies on this topic represents a deficit perspective (Durand, 2011), where most of the responsibility for partnership problems is placed on the parents. Thus, “good” parenting is often framed from the perspective of the majority (Durand, 2011). For me, it has been important to be aware of this bias in the literature and the skewed perspective that we may find as a result of a lack of representation of research from researchers with a minority background themselves. This again is a challenging landscape to navigate, as I am also a part of this myself – as a researcher with a majority background studying immigrant groups. Within the ISOTIS project, I have been fortunate enough to work with other scholars with different minority backgrounds and insider perspectives of the groups that we have worked with, and their perspectives and knowledge have contributed to help broaden my own, especially when it comes to differences in beliefs about child rearing.

In Paper I, a main ethical concern was to avoid bias in the selection of the studies, and this was approached through several strategies (see Section 3.4.1) to ensure accountability. All the data in Papers II and III were collected through the ISOTIS project and met the requirements of both the European General Data Protection Regulation (Reg. EU 2016/679) and the Norwegian Center for Research Data and received ethical approval from the Ethical Advisory Committee of Utrecht University. Informed consent was given by all participants, and they had the option to withdraw from the study at any time, without providing an explanation. All the data were anonymized and stored on a protected central data server at Utrecht University.

4 Results

This Ph.D. project aimed to *gain knowledge about the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC*. To approach this, several contexts, perspectives, and sources of data have been investigated throughout the three papers of the thesis. This chapter will shortly present the results from each paper and provide some integrated results that emerged from the project as a whole.

4.1 Paper I

In Paper I, we reviewed previous research through the following research question: *What are the barriers to and facilitators of the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care?* Based on the literature, language barriers emerged as the most frequent barrier for establishing partnerships. One study finds that having a minority status plays a greater role than language in such interactions (Turney & Kao, 2009); however, for many immigrants these factors are often highly intertwined. Even parents who have acquired relatively good skills in the language of the host country are found to experience a “double language barrier” in their interactions with ECEC professionals, as these conversations often include specialized educational language. Parents also experience challenges in their relationship with the professionals in their efforts to raise multilingual children. Fortunately, the reviewed studies suggest several promising practices to overcome language-related barriers and facilitate partnerships, such as hiring bilingual staff, using translators, translating materials, and translanguaging, as well as allotting more time for communication and parent-teacher conferences.

The reviewed literature also revealed asymmetrical power relationships between parents and professionals as a barrier for creating partnerships. This often manifests as a notion of the teacher as the expert, which can be seen as a universal and cross-cultural conception, and has been expressed by both parents and professionals. However, this notion may undervalue the different types of expertise held by the parents and the professionals, as they both hold complementary information and insight into a child’s experiences.

Lastly, cultural differences and differences in beliefs about topics such as pedagogy, practice, discipline, or goal setting were found to create disagreements among parents and professionals. Among parents with several different immigrant backgrounds, the studies find a hesitance towards approaching disagreements in a confrontational manner, often resulting in parents downplaying their own needs in order to maintain harmony. Moreover, the expectations with regard to the roles of both parents and professionals differ across contexts, for example, regarding the level of involvement expected from parents. Thus, implicit and unclear expectations concerning one another may complicate the relationship between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. However, these challenges may be overcome by professionals actively inviting parents to participate and through the explicit sharing of expectations regarding one another.

4.2 Paper II

In Paper II, we investigated the following research questions: (1) *How do ECEC professionals view their partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms?* and (2) *Do ECEC professionals' characteristics and practices predict their views on partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms?* The results indicated that in all four countries (England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands), ECEC professionals in multicultural classrooms view their relationships with parents as highly reciprocal and with low levels of hierarchical relations and problem-oriented contact. However, when it comes to sharing beliefs with the parents regarding their child's behavior and what their child can achieve, they tend to respond between "undecided" and "slightly agree," indicating that there is potential for more shared beliefs.

The observed patterns are similar across the four countries (i.e., the lowest and highest scores), though there were some slight mean level differences on the scales between countries. As a result, countries were dummified and included in the regression models, in which we investigated whether professional characteristics and practices could predict their views on partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms.

Furthermore, we investigated to what degree professionals' characteristics and practices predicted their views on partnerships with parents in their multicultural classrooms. These results show that for problem-oriented contact, 14.4% of the variance was explained by the model, although none of the variables were statistically significant predictors. For shared beliefs, the model explained 17.9% of the variance, with higher levels of multicultural practices relating to stronger shared beliefs. Next, 35% of the variance for reciprocal relations was explained by the model, with higher levels of multicultural practices relating to higher levels of reciprocal relations. In addition, having an immigrant background was related to significantly lower levels of reciprocal relations. Lastly, for hierarchical relations, 16.8% of the variance was explained by the model, with higher levels of diversity-related self-efficacy predicting lower levels of hierarchical relations.

4.3 Paper III

Paper III investigated the following research question: *How do parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals working in ethnically and culturally diverse ECEC provisions view their partnerships, and what are their beliefs about multicultural and multilingual education?* This paper builds on the findings from Paper II, narrowing down the focus to the Norwegian context as the partnership aspects appeared to differ somewhat between the European countries, and it included data from both parents and professionals. The parents displayed positive views of their partnerships with professionals in terms of their child's ECEC regarding all the investigated items. However, although most parents reported never having experienced discrimination by their child's teacher of either themselves or their child, one out of four participants reported having experienced this between "rarely" and "often," which arguably constitutes a barrier for partnerships for the parents who experience this. For the partnership items, however, the parents on average reported very positive views. These findings suggest that, in general, parents feel understood by and trust their child's teacher, they experience shared beliefs with their child's teacher, and the teacher does not communicate with them only when there is a problem. The professionals displayed, similarly to in Paper II, quite positive views, although their answers were significantly less positive than the parents' concerning all the investigated items. In addition, they only answered slightly

positively when it comes to sharing beliefs with the parents about the child's behavior and about what the child can achieve.

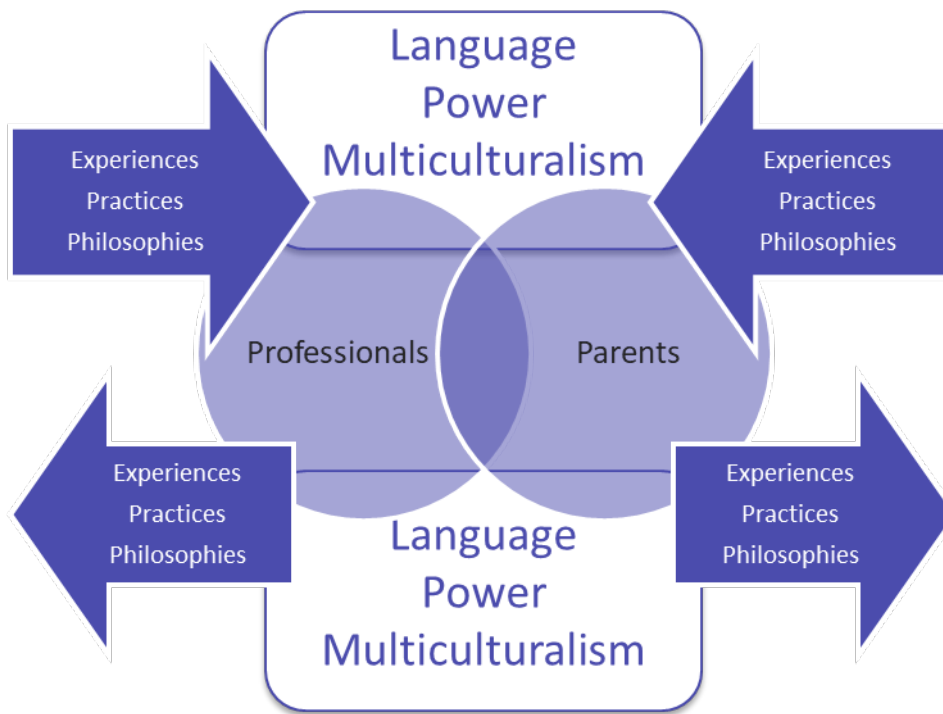
Based on the finding from Paper II suggesting that multicultural practices were the most significant predictor included in the model for positive partnership aspects, Paper III further investigated parents' and professionals' beliefs about multicultural and multilingual education and the extent to which these overlap. The results indicate that parents, teachers, and managers agree that multicultural values, such as respect for other cultures or sensitivity towards differences and similarities across cultures, are important for children in ECEC. For most of the items, there are no significant differences between the groups, indicating that parents, teachers, and managers share these values. However, when it comes to the egalitarian values of observing similarities among children from different countries and cultures, teachers and managers emphasize this somewhat more than the parents do.

For multilingual education, we found the largest variation in the responses. This variation is found both between the groups and in terms of high standard deviations, suggesting more variation in the responses within each group. Whereas teachers and managers answered between disagree and slightly disagree when asked if they believe that children with language backgrounds other than Norwegian will learn to speak Norwegian less quickly if they speak their home languages in ECEC, parents answered between "undecided" and "slightly agree." However, parents also agreed significantly more than teachers and managers that children with a minority language background should be offered the opportunity to learn their home languages in ECEC. Overall, the beliefs about multilingualism indicate that this is a topic where the opinions both among and between parents and professionals are heterogeneous.

4.4 Integrated results

So, what are the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC? Looking at the findings of this Ph.D. project as a whole, *language*, *power dynamics*, and *multiculturalism* emerge as the main content areas where barriers and facilitators for these partnerships are identified, as illustrated in Figure 5 and specified in Tables 4a–c.

Figure 5. Integrated results from the thesis



In Figure 5, the upper arrows in the model represent the facilitators for partnerships, whereas the lower arrows represent the barriers. According to Epstein (2018), the overlap between the two spheres of influence is affected by the experiences, practices, and philosophies of both parents and professionals, which can be seen as the forces pushing the arrows and thereby the spheres together (i.e., facilitators) or pulling them apart (i.e., barriers). The white boxes in the model show the knowledge contribution of this thesis, as they represent the main content areas of experiences, practices, and philosophies, which appear to impact partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. In Papers I and III, all these topics are investigated and discussed, whereas Paper II mainly focuses on *power dynamics* and *multiculturalism*. As Papers II and III are based on empirical findings and investigate narrower research questions than Paper I, the number of findings from Paper I is larger than those from Papers II and III in Tables 4a–c.

All three content areas comprise both barriers and facilitators, and the specific contribution from each paper is specified in Tables 4a–c, where all the barriers and facilitators are also identified as either an *experience*, *practice*, or *philosophy* (by either an *E*, *P*, or *Ph*).

Experiences, practices, and philosophies are closely interconnected (see Section 2.2), and the barriers and facilitators may represent one or more of these forces. As practices will often be rooted in philosophies, and philosophies will be connected to experiences, in turn influencing practices, there are no clear boundaries between these. Nevertheless, Tables 4a–c indicate the main force(s) with which a specific finding may fit. The findings from this project suggest that we currently have more knowledge about barriers than we have about facilitators. However, knowledge about barriers may indicate potential facilitators that could be investigated further. Furthermore, the findings suggest that promising facilitators are often found among professionals' practices, which emphasizes the significance of adopting inclusive policies and practices in ECEC.

Table 4a. Barriers and facilitators for partnerships relating to language

Barriers	Facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents with immigrant backgrounds experience a lack of patience and sensitivity regarding language (Paper I, <i>E</i>). • ECEC centers not using translators for parent-teacher conferences (Paper I, <i>P</i>). • With many languages represented in a setting, it may be difficult to accommodate all languages equally (Paper I, <i>E</i>). • Parents may perceive bilingual staff as a disadvantage, as these are often not native speakers of the language of the host country (Paper I, <i>E, Ph, P</i>). • Specialized educational language may constitute a double language barrier for parents with immigrant backgrounds (Paper I, <i>E, P</i>). • Parents report experiencing a lack of understanding from professionals regarding challenges their children face when learning two (or more) languages (Paper I, <i>E</i>). • Parents' and professionals' beliefs about multilingual education differ substantially (Paper III, <i>Ph</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiring bilingual staff members (Paper I, <i>P</i>). • Using translators (Paper I, <i>P</i>). • Translating signs, materials, and newsletters (Paper I, <i>P</i>). • Allotting more time for communication, both daily and in parent-teacher conferences (Paper I, <i>P</i>). • Translanguaging, the systematic use of two languages in education (Paper I, <i>P</i>).

Table 4b. Barriers and facilitators for partnerships relating to power dynamics

Barriers	Facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both parents and professionals are often found to view the professional as the expert, which has been found to create an imbalance between them (Paper I, <i>Ph</i>). • Although professionals are viewed as experts across cultures, this view may manifest differently across cultures, leading to quite different expectations regarding one another (Paper I, <i>Ph</i>). • Parents and professionals often have unequal familiarity with the genre of parent-teacher conferences (Paper I, <i>E</i>). • Professionals report not having enough time to establish a relationship with parents with immigrant backgrounds, which may make the professionals appear inaccessible to the parents (Paper I, <i>E</i>). • Although most parents with immigrant backgrounds in Norway do not report experiences of discrimination from their child’s teacher, these types of experiences may inhibit partnerships for the minority among the parents who experience this (Paper III, <i>E</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It may be fruitful to emphasize parents and professionals as experts in different areas of children’s lives (Paper I, <i>Ph, P</i>). • Reciprocity is pivotal in a partnership, and very high levels of reciprocal relations are reported by professionals in England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands (Paper II, <i>P, Ph</i>)⁷. • Acknowledging each other as equals is important in a partnership, and professionals in England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands report low levels of hierarchical relations, indicating that they do not view their role as paramount to the parents (Paper II, <i>Ph, P</i>)⁷. • Professionals in England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands report low levels of problem-oriented contact in their relationships with parents (Paper II, <i>E</i>)⁷.

⁷ Reciprocal relations, as well as a lack of hierarchical relations and problem orientation, describe different aspects of a partnership and were found among professionals in Paper II. As such, these may rather be seen as components of a partnership, rather than facilitators.

Table 4c. Barriers and facilitators for partnerships relating to multiculturalism

Barriers	Facilitators
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents experience cultural disagreements with professionals (Paper I, <i>E</i>). • The expectations regarding the relationship between parents and professionals differ between countries and cultures, and this may equip them with diverging expectations in relation to one another (Paper I, <i>Ph</i>, <i>E</i>). • Parents with immigrant backgrounds often appear hesitant to confront professionals and may downplay their needs in order to avoid conflict and maintain harmony (Paper I, <i>P</i>). • Parents from some cultures may demonstrate their respect for a professional’s authority by not voicing their opinions (Paper I, <i>Ph</i>, <i>P</i>). • Responses from professionals in England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands indicate some potential for sharing more beliefs about a child’s behavior and about what a child can achieve (Paper II, <i>E</i>). • An immigrant background among professionals was found to predict lower levels of reciprocal relations (Paper II, <i>Ph</i>). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multicultural practices are found to significantly predict higher levels of shared beliefs and reciprocal relations among professionals in England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands (Paper II, <i>P</i>). • Higher levels of diversity-related self-efficacy among professionals in England, Italy, Norway, and the Netherlands are found to predict lower levels of hierarchical relations (Paper II, <i>E</i>). • In Norway, parents and professionals report similar beliefs about multicultural education, indicating that they value both sensitivity towards differences and similarities across cultures, as well as respect for other cultures as early as possible (Paper III, <i>Ph</i>).

Note. *E* = Experiences, *P* = Practices, *Ph* = Philosophies, from Epstein’s (2018) forces that increase or decrease the overlap between the different spheres of influence, see Chapter 2.

5 Discussion

This thesis has investigated the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC through three papers and using different methods and by drawing on Bronfenbrenner's model of human development (1979) as well as Epstein's (2018) theory of overlapping spheres of influence. This final chapter will discuss the main findings from the project as a whole, as well as methodological issues related to studying partnerships. Finally, the chapter will point to possible implications resulting from this project for theory and practice within the field of ECEC.

5.1 Discussion of the main findings

For partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, the main barriers and facilitators as indicated by this thesis can be categorized into three content areas, namely *language*, *power dynamics*, and *multiculturalism*. Within these content areas, the experiences, practices, and philosophies of parents and professionals may be influenced by several system levels, such as the values and beliefs present in the society (macrosystem) or their life events (chronosystem). The barriers and facilitators within the three content areas may be viewed as the specific forces that often pull together, or push apart, the overlapping spheres of influence between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. The findings further indicate a complex interplay between the experiences, practices, and philosophies of parents and professionals, where both parts influence the relationship interchangeably.

Throughout the project, the contextualized nature of partnerships between parents and professionals in ECEC, as a meso-level process (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), has become increasingly evident. Whereas earlier research on this topic has often revolved around parents and parental involvement (Heng, 2014), this thesis, as well as the more recent literature on the topic (see Paper I and Section 1.3), indicates a slight shift in focus. This shift acknowledges that parents' and professionals' experiences of their relationship do not occur in a vacuum, but are influenced by each part's interactions with the child, as well as with society. Thus, gaining contextualized knowledge about the views and experiences of both parents and

professionals is fundamental and has been pivotal in this project. The findings indicate that professionals may hold several keys to facilitating partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds, as the majority of the identified facilitators are found among professionals' *practices* (see Tables 4a–c). Furthermore, all three papers suggest that the nature of the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC appears to be context-sensitive, as there are, for example, differences between countries and immigrant groups. Although each partnership is unique and exists in a complex interplay with the contextual conditions, there appear to be several barriers and facilitators surrounding language, power dynamics, and multiculturalism that may be relevant across several contexts. In the following sections, the findings from this thesis will be discussed within each of these content areas: *language*, *power dynamics*, and *multiculturalism*.

5.1.1 Barriers and facilitators related to language

Language emerges in this thesis as a content area where barriers and facilitators for partnerships are found with regard to two main aspects, and it is mainly investigated through Papers I and III. First, language emerges as a topic directly related to the communication between parents and professionals (see Paper I), and second, it is also related to parents' and professionals' beliefs about multilingual education for the child (see Papers I and III). As identified in Paper I, as well as in the updated literature review (see Section 1.3), parents' skills in terms of the language of the host country are identified through previous literature as pivotal for communication between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. A Norwegian study even indicates that parents are required to possess sufficient skills in the Norwegian language to be acknowledged by the professionals as significant stakeholders (Sønsthagen, 2020). Insufficient skills in the language of the host country among parents appears to be a barrier that exists on a continuum line, as even parents who have become relatively fluent speakers may find specialized educational terms challenging (Howard & Lipinoga, 2010; Sohn & Wang, 2006;). Parents further report a lack of patience from professionals (Heng, 2014; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Whitmarsh, 2011), and professionals report not having the time to communicate with parents with immigrant backgrounds (Guo, 2005).

In order to overcome language-related communication barriers, previous literature suggests several facilitating strategies. These include hiring bilingual staff members (De Gioia, 2015; Heng, 2014); using translators (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Heng, 2014; Howard & Lipinoga, 2010) and translating signs, materials, and newsletters (Howard & Lipinoga, 2010; Whitmarsh, 2011); allotting more time for communication (Sohn & Wang, 2006); translanguaging (i.e., the systematic use of two or more languages in education) (Mary & Young, 2017); and using written communication (Smith, 2020). Furthermore, professionals have implemented creative strategies, such as “pantomime, illustration, personal examples, physical movements, pictures, and explanations” (Eliyahu-Levi & Ganz-Meishar, 2019, p. 191), as well as “eye contact, smiling, nodding, using gestures” (Smith, 2020, p. 122) or attempts to speak the parents’ language (Smith, 2020). Yet, several considerations appear to be crucial in order to implement the most appropriate strategies in each context as each of the facilitating practices may also have drawbacks. One example of this is hiring bilingual staff, which may provide communicative support for both parents and children and which is often regarded as best practice in settings comprising families with immigrant backgrounds (Whitmarsh, 2011). However, as ECEC settings with children with immigrant backgrounds often comprise child groups with a number of different home languages, it may be challenging to accommodate all the languages present among the families in the group of professionals (Whitmarsh, 2011). Many parents view fluency in the national language as a pivotal skill for their child to acquire in ECEC (Tobin, 2020). However, bilingual staff are often not native speakers of the language of the host country, and as such, parents with other home languages than the ones spoken by the bilingual staff may consider such staff to be a disadvantage for their child, rather than a benefit (Whitmarsh, 2011). On the other hand, if there are only a few languages represented in an ECEC setting, and these are consistent over time, or if bilingual staff who speak the language of the host country fluently are available, they may be an excellent option. These considerations illustrate how complex and context-specific language-related communication barriers and facilitators may be in the relationship between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, as both parents and professionals bring their own practices, experiences, and philosophies to the mesosystem.

The second language-related barrier for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC identified in this thesis relates to beliefs regarding multilingual education for children. Previous studies have suggested that, as multilingual children may get frustrated when learning to navigate two (or more) languages, parents report experiencing a lack of understanding of these challenges from the professionals' side, which may challenge the relationship between parents and professionals (Shor, 2007; Whitmarsh, 2011). As children with immigrant backgrounds will often need the support of both their home and ECEC environments in order to learn two (or more) languages, this is a highly relevant area of cooperation between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals. However, as shown in Paper III, parents' and professionals' beliefs about how best to support multilingual children's language development differ substantially, and the beliefs even vary substantially within the groups of parents and professionals. However, previous research also indicates inconsistent findings regarding parents' and professionals' multilingual beliefs (Aghallaj et al., 2020). One example of this is found in parents' and professionals' responses to the statement "By speaking their home language in ECEC, children with other language backgrounds will learn to speak Norwegian less quickly," with which parents agree to a significantly higher degree than professionals (see Paper III). Furthermore, both parents and professionals only respond between "undecided" and "slightly agree" to the statement "Children with non-Norwegian home languages should be allowed to speak their home languages to each other at ECEC." Some of these beliefs found among parents and professionals appear to be somewhat surprising given the body of research-based knowledge regarding multilingualism today. It is, for example, widely acknowledged that multilingualism provides several cognitive, social, and linguistic benefits for children, in addition to the direct advantage of speaking more than one language (Espinosa, 2015; Langeloo et al., 2019). However, in order for children to draw on these benefits, fostering an inviting and supportive environment for language development is pivotal (Pontier et al., 2020), both in the home and in the ECEC context. Moreover, a substantial amount of evidence suggests that environments that invite children to use their full repertoire of languages (practices often referred to as translanguaging) support multilingual development (Alanís, 2018; Baker, 2019; Bengochea et al., 2018; Schwartz & Deeb, 2021). Thus, the beliefs found among parents and professionals,

indicating a hesitance towards children speaking their home languages in ECEC, are not in line with the knowledge from the research in this field. This raises two questions, which may have implications for both teacher education programs as well as future research: Do professionals possess sufficient knowledge about early multilingual language development? And if so, do they share their knowledge with the parents?

In sum, language plays a pivotal role in partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, where both parents and professionals bring diverging philosophies to the mesosystem, in turn affecting their practices and each other's experiences. Language may influence these meso-level processes both on a practical and an emotional level (e.g., through experiencing impatience from professionals), as well as through how they align their efforts to support a child's multilingual development.

5.1.2 Barriers and facilitators related to power dynamics

The focus on power dynamics between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals has gained increased attention in recent years (see e.g., Ashraf, 2019; Conus & Fahrni, 2019; McWayne et al., 2021; Sønsthagen, 2020; Van Laere et al., 2018). As asymmetrical power relations were identified as a main barrier for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in Paper I, professionals' views on power-related partnership aspects were further investigated through Papers II and III. Previous research suggests that parents with immigrant backgrounds express a strong wish to communicate with the professionals (Hachfeld et al., 2011). As these parents may be less familiar with the ECEC system in their host country than non-immigrant parents, interactions with ECEC professionals may be even more significant with regard to these parents' opportunities to support their children in navigating between the different microsystems and for aligning their efforts with the professionals to support the children's development. Previous research, however, suggests that immigrant parents often experience few opportunities to communicate with professionals (Hachfeld et al., 2016; Shor, 2007; Sohn & Wang, 2006; Van Laere et al., 2018; Yahya, 2016). In addition, other studies indicate that professionals may not always be aware of parents' need for more communication (Ashraf,

2019; Conus & Fahrni, 2019) and that they may even explain the lack of communication through characteristics related to parents with immigrant backgrounds. Such characteristics may include parents' lack of education, lack of skills in the language of the host country, lack of confidence, or lack of familiarity with the education system (Ashraf, 2019). Thus, the asymmetrical power dynamics in the relationship between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC may not always be visible to or perceived by the professionals as a barrier for creating partnerships.

Despite the asymmetrical power dynamics found in previous research, the professionals' views on partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds in four European countries (Paper II) were found to be highly reciprocal and non-hierarchical, and they report not having a problem-oriented view of these partnerships. This indicates that, in contrast to the findings in previous studies (see e.g., Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Guo, 2005), the professionals in this study do not view their role as paramount to the parents. However, as parents' perspectives are not investigated in Paper II, it cannot be determined whether this finding indeed represents a tendency towards more positive partnerships or whether this is just the case from the professionals' perspective. In Paper III, however, both parents with an immigrant background and professionals working with parents with an immigrant background from Norway report quite positive views on their partnerships, as indicated by high levels of trust, understanding, and shared beliefs and low levels of problem-oriented contact. Furthermore, most parents state not having experienced any discrimination from their child's teacher, which is considered as a fundamental prerequisite for a partnership. Although it is positive that most parents report not having had such experiences, some parents still report incidents of discrimination by their child's teacher. This indicates an area future research should include in order to gain more in depth knowledge about the nature of these experiences.

In sum, this thesis' findings related to the power dynamics between parents and professionals reveal that barriers range across a spectrum within this landscape, from the more obvious types of power imbalance found in experiences of discrimination among parents (see Paper III) to the more subtle views of professionals as experts, which may inhibit parents in questioning professionals' practices (see Paper I). However, the findings further suggest

considerable differences between countries and contexts regarding this issue, suggesting that professionals' philosophies and practices may play an important role in shaping the power dynamics in their relationships with parents. As some of the barriers experienced by parents appear to be subtle, facilitating equal partnerships may require critical reflection from the side of the professionals, as well as mutual acknowledgement of each part's expertise resulting from ECEC and the home.

5.1.3 Barriers and facilitators related to multiculturalism

Multiculturalism emerges as a final topic in this thesis, where both barriers and facilitators emerge throughout all three papers. According to Paper I, previous literature suggests that parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals may experience cultural disagreements related to several areas, such as pedagogy and practice (De Gioia, 2015), discipline (Bernhard et al., 2004; Shor, 2007), and educational goal setting (Cheatham & Ostrosky, 2013; Döge & Keller, 2014). Furthermore, the expected roles of parents and professionals in ECEC may differ substantially between cultures as macro-level values and beliefs may differ between societies and manifest as practices, philosophies, and experiences within the relationships between parents and professionals. This may lead both parts to approach each other with quite different expectations regarding their relationship, which has been found to result in misunderstandings or even conflicts (see e.g., Heng, 2014; Sohn & Wang, 2006).

Although parents and professionals may experience several barriers related to cultural differences, multiculturalism is also a content area where several facilitating practices have been identified. In Paper II, the partnership aspect that was found to hold the strongest potential for improvement was sharing beliefs with the parents about the child's behavior and about what the child can achieve. As this aspect relates to how both parts view the child, and neither parents nor professionals will possess sufficient knowledge about the child in both contexts without communicating with each other, this may point towards potential to communicate more closely in everyday interactions. Having shared beliefs was found to be significantly predicted by professionals' multicultural practices, suggesting that implementing practices, such as celebrating diverse cultural holidays or practices, may facilitate closer

communication with the parents. Thus, practices that acknowledge diverse cultural expressions may be a facilitator for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC and may create arenas for concrete collaboration (i.e., not only talking but also creating shared experiences). The value of implementing culturally inclusive practices in ECEC is also supported by the findings from Paper III, showing that both parents and professionals agree that children should learn to respect other cultures as early as possible and that professionals should be sensitive to differences between children from different countries and cultures. The findings from Paper II also suggest that professionals with higher self-efficacy related to working with children from diverse culturally and linguistic backgrounds have fewer hierarchical views of their partnerships with parents and, as such, act more in terms of what is understood as being a partnership within this thesis.

In sum, the findings from this thesis indicate that multicultural practices and values may hold several keys to facilitating partnerships and can provide parents with immigrant backgrounds and ECEC professionals with valuable arenas for exchanging knowledge from each context with each other. Furthermore, the findings summarized above indicate a potential area for professional development, as well as pre-service teacher education, as there appears to be several benefits for partnerships of educating professionals who are able to implement multicultural practices in their work and who experience self-efficacy through working in multicultural contexts.

5.2 Discussion of the methods

This thesis has investigated partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC through different methods, aiming to provide knowledge from different contexts and perspectives. Each of the methods used entail strengths and weaknesses, and these are addressed in each paper, as well as in Chapter 3. To elaborate and expand on these previous considerations, the following discussion will focus on limitations in terms of the partnership measures used throughout the thesis, as these measures are pivotal for the interpretation of the findings. Furthermore, the discussion will elaborate on some issues related to the study samples and the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, the finding from Paper II relating to the fact that lower levels of reciprocal relations were predicted by

professionals with immigrant backgrounds will be discussed in more detail, exploring some additional explanations regarding this somewhat surprising finding.

5.2.1 Investigating partnerships

Partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and ECEC professionals have been a key investigative concept throughout all the papers included in this thesis. They have been investigated empirically in Papers II and III by items aimed at measuring the relationship between parents and professionals in the ISOTIS project (Broekhuizen et al., 2018; Slot et al., 2018). As previously mentioned in Section 3.4, partnerships are operationalized slightly differently in Papers II and III and conceptualized somewhat more broadly in Paper I, which means that when each paper reports on partnerships, the content comprises slight shifts in focus. Nevertheless, both of the measures in the empirical papers (II & III) focus on theoretically grounded aspects of a partnership (see Epstein, 2018; Simon & Epstein, 2001), which, when combined, capture partnership aspects, such as trust, reciprocity, understanding, shared responsibility, and acknowledging each other as equals. Looking back at the process of this Ph.D. project, one aspect appears to be increasingly important and should be included in future research on this topic. This aspect is the daily exchange of information between parents and professionals, which was not included in any of the partnership measures used in this thesis, as they focuses more on the qualities of the relationship between parents and professionals. However, as the main purpose of a partnership in the present context is to create coherence between the child's two main microsystems (i.e., the home and ECEC), the exchange of information concerning the child's different microsystems may be seen as a pivotal part of a partnership between parents and professionals. Thus, the presence of daily interactions, which gives parents information about the child's day in ECEC or provides the professionals with relevant information from the home environment, should not be overlooked. However, as the center of the relationship between parents and professionals should be the child (Epstein, 2018), it is likely that the qualities of the relationship are highly interconnected with the exchange of information between the parts. Thus, although the exchange of information is not explicitly investigated in the partnership measures used in this thesis, this aspect may be connected to shared beliefs between parents and professionals,

which is investigated in both empirical papers (Papers II & III). Nevertheless, the daily exchange of information may be relevant to more explicit investigation in future research.

5.2.2 Study samples and generalizability

For the empirical studies in this thesis (Papers II & III), the sample sizes are quite small, especially the sample of parents with immigrant backgrounds ($n = 32$) in Paper III. Although the small sample sizes may influence the estimates and the findings should therefore be interpreted carefully, studies with smaller sample sizes may nevertheless provide useful knowledge (Hackshaw, 2008). Recruiting participants with immigrant backgrounds is often a challenging task (Lopez-Class et al., 2016), and this was also the case for the recruitment within the ISOTIS project (Broekhuizen et al., 2018). Yet, a rough estimate indicates that the sample of Turkish parents in Norway may represent up to 10% of the parents with children in the right age group in Eastern Norway, as the Turkish group of immigrants in Norway is quite small (see Broekhuizen et al., 2018). Thus, although the sample is small, it may provide a unique opportunity to gain knowledge based on the perspectives and experiences of parents who have been less visible in previous research on the Norwegian ECEC context.

Within the ISOTIS project, the Norwegian sample of parents with immigrant backgrounds was limited to parents with Turkish backgrounds. However, there are several other groups of parents with immigrant backgrounds in the Norwegian context, especially from countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Somalia, Pakistan, and Syria, which comprise the largest groups of non-western immigrants in Norway (Statistics Norway, 2020). Therefore, future research should aim to gain knowledge from parents with a broader range of backgrounds, while simultaneously investigating them as unique groups and individuals, as parents with immigrant backgrounds are not homogenous. Furthermore, the samples used in Paper III do not necessarily belong to the same ECEC centers, although the parents and professionals were recruited from the same areas. For future research, clustered samples may inform studies more specifically on the partnership mechanisms from actual parent-professional dyads. Furthermore, intervention designs and randomized controlled trials (RCTs) may be well suited to further investigating the effects on partnerships of facilitating practices, such as involving parents with immigrant backgrounds through implementing more multicultural practices or

through allotting more time for the daily exchange of information. However, in order to investigate the nature of parents' experiences with discrimination more closely, as suggested in Paper III, qualitative approaches may be suitable for exploration and may provide the nuances needed to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of these experiences (Choy, 2014).

As mesosystems are highly context-sensitive (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), globally generalizable knowledge about the barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC has not been the focus of this thesis. Still, some experiences, practices, and philosophies appear to be common among parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in several contexts, and these are mainly identified within the content areas of language, power dynamics, and multiculturalism. For future research, it may be relevant to further investigate how contextual factors, such as organizational aspects or ECEC policies, may facilitate partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, in order to inform managers, practitioners, and policy makers.

5.2.3 Less reciprocity among professionals with immigrant backgrounds?

In Paper II, having an immigrant background was found to predict lower levels of reported reciprocal relations among the professionals. This finding contrasts with findings from previous studies, which have found that professionals with immigrant backgrounds may have stronger mechanisms to communicate with parents with immigrant backgrounds (Adair, 2016; Calzada et al., 2015; Whitmarsh, 2011). Possible explanations for this finding were discussed in the paper (i.e., the low number of professionals with immigrant backgrounds in our sample and the culturally embedded nature of the partnership concept), but some additional explanations may be worth discussing. First, it is worth noting that although having an immigrant background predicted lower levels of reciprocal relations, this may not only be specific to their relationship with parents with immigrant backgrounds. The sample included professionals who work in classrooms where a minimum of 25% of the children have a different cultural background. Therefore, the lower levels of reciprocity found among these professionals may also apply to their relationship with parents with non-immigrant

backgrounds. Nevertheless, the majority of the professionals in the sample worked in classrooms where 75% or more of the children had a different cultural background, making this explanation less plausible. Future research could investigate more specifically the relationships with parents with immigrant backgrounds, for example, by focusing on specific dyads of teachers and parents instead of all the parents in a group. This also makes it possible to take more aspects of the specific parents and professionals (e.g., their type of background or their skills in the national language) into account.

Second, the samples from the four countries reveal an uneven distribution of professionals with immigrant backgrounds, with a high proportion of professionals with immigrant backgrounds found in England (35%), somewhat lower numbers in the Netherlands (14%) and Norway (7%), and none in Italy (0%). Although professionals in all the countries display high levels of reciprocal relations, England is the country with the lowest levels of reciprocal relations, despite having by far the largest proportion of professionals with an immigrant background. The result may therefore be affected by the coexistence of a general lower level of reciprocal relations found among professionals in England. We tried to address this in our analyses by including country fixed effects in our analysis; however, due to the small sample sizes, it is possible that we could not cancel out this alternative explanation completely. In summary, this finding may have several possible explanations (see also the discussion in Paper II), and it should therefore be interpreted with caution.

5.3 Implications for theory and practice

The findings from this thesis have several implications for theory and practice. Theoretically, this thesis employs Bronfenbrenner's (1979) model of human development and Epstein's (2018) theory of overlapping spheres of influence. Bronfenbrenner (1979) emphasizes the context as pivotal for understanding meso-level processes, such as partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, and the findings from this thesis support the importance of contextual factors, such as policies, cultures, and languages, and further supports the interconnectedness of the different system levels (i.e., micro, meso, exo, macro, and chrono). Furthermore, Epstein suggests that the different spheres of influence can be either pulled together or pushed apart by the practices, experiences, and

philosophies of both parents and professionals, and these forces have served as a useful analytical framework for the integrated results in this thesis. The main theoretical contribution of this thesis is the identification of language, power dynamics, and multiculturalism as specific content areas where barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC are found (see Figure 5).

For the field of ECEC, the content areas represent topics that may be relevant to reflect upon regularly and incorporate into teacher education programs and in-service professional development. In the Norwegian context, where Paper III provided perspectives from parents with a Turkish immigrant background, the findings indicate that professionals already engage quite successfully in partnerships, although there is still some potential for improvement (e.g., in the reported experiences of discrimination). However, little is still known about the experiences of other groups of parents with immigrant backgrounds in Norway. As most facilitators for partnerships in this thesis are found among professionals' practices, such as incorporating practices that acknowledge different cultures or allotting more time for communication, it can be concluded that professionals play a pivotal role in facilitating partnerships with all parents in ECEC. Furthermore, although there are several ways in which parents with immigrant backgrounds themselves may approach the professionals in ECEC, the number of barriers for partnerships, which are directly related to practices among the professionals, underlines the professionals' responsibility to empower parents and play on their strengths. However, as indicated by previous research (see Paper I), the barriers experienced by parents with immigrant backgrounds may not always be visible to the professionals. Thus, critical reflection, as well as actively requesting these parents' input, may be needed in order to identify specific barriers in each mesosystem. Based on the knowledge contribution from this thesis, relevant questions for ECEC professionals to reflect upon might include the following:

- How do we facilitate language barriers between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in our setting? How can we involve parents in our work to create a stimulating language learning environment for the multilingual children in our group?

- How do we work towards creating an equal power balance between all parents and the professionals in our setting?
- How do we implement practices that acknowledge different cultures in our setting, and how can parents be included in this work?

For professionals, critical reflection upon their practices may be a starting point for implementing facilitating practices for partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds in ECEC. Through critical reflections, professionals' philosophies regarding their relationships with these parents may develop. To ensure that philosophies translate into practices, critical reflection should be followed up with a systematic plan for the implementation of change (Gotvassli, 2017). This may be done in several ways and requires leadership and motivation among the professionals to investigate how they influence their relationships with parents today, as well as an openness to changing their practices. Professional development that includes whole teams of professionals in learning communities may facilitate the implementation of new knowledge, beliefs, and practices among professionals and has been linked to more permanent changes in attitudes and practices (Slot et al., 2018). Given the significance of partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC for children's well-being and learning (Aghallaj et al., 2020; Epstein, 2018), facilitating partnerships may be seen as a professional responsibility.

5.4 Conclusions

Raising a child is arguably one of life's great challenges. When parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals take on this task together during the years a child spends in ECEC, they may face several barriers. However, bridging the different microsystems within which the child navigates with a high-functioning partnership (i.e., the mesosystem), may be even more significant for children with immigrant backgrounds (Aghallaj et al., 2020). Thus, creating partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds in ECEC is a task that should be given sufficient attention. Within the emerging research field of partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, this thesis finds that we currently still know more about the barriers for these partnerships than the facilitators. However, several facilitators are identified among the practices of professionals, such as

acknowledging parents' experiential knowledge about their child and allotting enough time for daily communication. Thus, professionals have the responsibility to facilitate partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds in order to provide their children with equal educational opportunities. Through creating partnerships, parents and professionals may work together to strengthen children's opportunities for learning and well-being at home and in ECEC, which will benefit children today and in the future.

References

- Adair, J. K. (2016). Creating positive contexts of reception: The value of immigrant teachers in US early childhood education programs. *Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas*, 24(1), 1–30.
- Aghallaj, R., Van Der Wildt, A., Vandebroek, M., & Agirdag, O. (2020). Exploring the partnership between language minority parents and professionals in early childhood education and care: A systematic review. In C. Kirsch & J. Duarte (Eds.), *Multilingual approaches for teaching and learning: From acknowledging to capitalising on multilingualism in European mainstream education* (pp. 151–167). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429059674-12?context=ubx&refId=703ae4fda9c8-4fca-9c5a-72ffd898b16b>
- Alanís, I. (2018). Enhancing collaborative learning: Activities and structures in a dual language preschool classroom. *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal*, 12(1), 5–26.
- Anderstaf, S., Lecusay, R., & Nilsson, M. (2021). “Sometimes we have to clash”: How preschool teachers in Sweden engage with dilemmas arising from cultural diversity and value differences. *Intercultural Education*, 32(3), 296–310.
- Ashraf, S. (2019). Pakistani parents and their children’s school: Parent and school staff perspectives on parental involvement at the foundation stage. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 22(5), 703–721.

- Baker, M. (2019). Playing, talking, co-constructing: Exemplary teaching for young dual language learners across program types. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 47(1), 115–130.
- Baraldi, A. N., & Enders, C. K. (2010). An introduction to modern missing data analysis. *Journal of School Psychology*, 48(1), 5–37.
- Bengochea, A., Sembiente, S. F., & Gort, M. (2018). An emergent bilingual child's multimodal choices in sociodramatic play. *Journal of Early Childhood Literacy*, 18(1), 38–70.
- Bernhard, J. K., Freire, M., Bascunan, L., Arenas, R., Verga, N. R., & Gana, D. (2004). Behaviour and misbehaviour of Latino children in a time of zero tolerance: Mothers' views. *Early Years*, 24(1), 49–62.
- Booth, A., Sutton, A., & Papaioannou, D. (2016). *Systematic approaches to a successful literature review*. Sage.
- Boslaugh, S. (2012). *Statistics in a nutshell: A desktop quick reference*. O'Reilly Media, Inc.
- Broekhuizen, M. L., Ereky-Stevens, K., Wolf, K., & Moser, T. (2018). *Technical report parent structured interview study: Procedures, instrument development, samples, and showcases*. http://www.isotis.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/D2.2_Parent-structured-interview-study_Technical-report_final.pdf
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The ecology of human development: Experiments by nature and design*. Harvard University Press.

- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspectives. *Developmental Psychology*, 22(6), 723–742.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1988). Interacting systems in human development: Research paradigms: Present and future. In N. Bolger, A. Caspi, G. Downey, & M. Moorehouse (Eds.), *Persons in context: Developmental processes* (pp. 25–49). Cambridge University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Condry Jr, J. C. (1970). *Two worlds of childhood: US and USSR*. Russel Sage Foundation.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., & Morris, P. A. (1998). The ecology of developmental processes. In W. Damon & R. Lerner, *Handbook of child psychology: Theoretical models of human development* (pp. 993–1028). John Wiley & Sons Inc.
- Calzada, E. J., Huang, K. Y., Hernandez, M., Soriano, E., Acra, C. F., Dawson-McClure, S., & Brotman, L. (2015). Family and teacher characteristics as predictors of parent involvement in education during early childhood among Afro-Caribbean and Latino immigrant families. *Urban Education*, 50(7), 870–896.
- Carrig, M. M., & Hoyle, R. H. (2011). Measurement choices: Reliability, validity, and generalizability. *Handbook of ethics in quantitative methodology* (pp. 127–159). Routledge.

- Cheatham, G. A., & Ostrosky, M. M. (2013). Goal setting during early childhood parent-teacher conferences: A comparison of three groups of parents. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 27*(2), 166–189.
- Choy, L. T. (2014). The strengths and weaknesses of research methodology: Comparison and complimentary between qualitative and quantitative approaches. *Journal of Humanities and Social Science, 19*(4), 99–104.
- Cochran, M. (2011). International perspectives on early childhood education. *Educational Policy, 25*(1), 65–91.
- Conus, X., & Fahrni, L. (2019). Routine communication between teachers and parents from minority groups: An endless misunderstanding? *Educational Review, 71*(2), 234–256.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2011). Choosing a mixed methods design. *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research, 2*, 53–106.
- Damon, W., & Lerner, R. M. (Eds.). (2006). *Handbook of child psychology. Theoretical models of human development*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Daugstad, G. (2008). *Innvandring og innvandrere 2008. Statistiske analyser (Immigration and immigrants 2008. Statistical analysis)*, (103). Statistisk sentralbyrå.
- De Gioia, K. (2015). Immigrant and refugee mothers' experiences of the transition into childcare: A case study. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 23*(5), 662–672.
- Denzin, N. K. (2012). Triangulation 2.0. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 6*(2), 80–88.

- Durand, T. M. (2011). Latino parental involvement in kindergarten: Findings from the early childhood longitudinal study. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 33*(4), 469-489.
- Döge, P., & Keller, H. (2014). Similarity of mothers' and preschool teachers' evaluations of socialization goals in a cross-cultural perspective. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 28*(3), 377–393.
- Eliyahu-Levi, D., & Ganz-Meishar, M. (2019). The personal relationship between the kindergarten teacher and the parents as a mediator between cultures. *International Journal of Early Years Education, 27*(2), 184–199.
- Enders, C. K. (2013). Dealing with missing data in developmental research. *Child Development Perspectives, 7*(1), 27–31.
- Epstein, J. L. (2018). *School, family, and community partnerships: Preparing educators and improving schools*. Routledge.
- Espinosa, L. M. (2015). Challenges and benefits of early bilingualism in the US context. *Global Education Review, 2*(1), 40–53.
- European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice. (2019). *Key data on early childhood education and care in Europe – 2019 edition. Eurydice report*. Publications Office of the European Union.
- European Commission Knowledge 4 Policy. (2020). *Migration in Europe*. https://knowledge4policy.ec.europa.eu/foresight/topic/increasing-significance-migration/migration-worldwide_en

Eurostat. (2020). *International standard classification of education*. Statistics explained.

[https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_\(ISCED\)#Background](https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=International_Standard_Classification_of_Education_(ISCED)#Background)

Flick, U. (2018). *Designing qualitative research*. Sage.

Forskningsetikkloven. (2017). *Lov om organisering av forskningsetisk arbeid* (LOV-2006-06-30-56). Lovdata. <https://lovdata.no/dokument/NL/lov/2017-04-28-23?q=forskningsetikk%20loven>

Geddes, A., & Scholten, P. (2016). *The politics of migration and immigration in Europe*. Sage.

Gobo, G. (2008). *Doing ethnography*. Sage.

Gotvassli, K.-Å. (2017). Ledelse av en lærende barnehage. *Utdanningsforskning*. <https://utdanningsforskning.no/artikler/2017/ledelse-av-en-larende-barnehage/>

Green, E. G., Visintin, E. P., Sarrasin, O., & Hewstone, M. (2020). When integration policies shape the impact of intergroup contact on threat perceptions: A multilevel study across 20 European countries. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(3), 631–648.

Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 11(3), 255–274.

- Guo, K. (2005). Asian immigrant parents' and New Zealand early childhood teachers' views of parent-teacher relationships. *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education, 8*, 125–135.
- Hachfeld, A., Anders, Y., Kuger, S., & Smidt, W. (2016). Triggering parental involvement for parents of different language backgrounds: The role of types of partnership activities and preschool characteristics. *Early Child Development and Care, 186*(1), 190–211.
- Hachfeld, A., Hahn, A., Schroeder, S., Anders, Y., Stanat, P., & Kunter, M. (2011). Assessing teachers' multicultural and egalitarian beliefs: The teacher cultural beliefs scale. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 27*(6), 986-996.
- Hackshaw, A. (2008). Small studies: Strengths and limitations. *European Respiratory Journal, 35*(5), 1141–1143.
- Hayes, N., O'Toole, L., & Halpenny, A. M. (2017). *Introducing Bronfenbrenner: A guide for practitioners and students in early years education*. Routledge.
- Haymes, M. V., O'Donoghue, S., & Nguyen, H. (2019). The impact of school-based volunteering on social capital and self-and collective efficacy among low-income mothers. *Children & Schools, 41*(2), 79–88.
- Heng, T. T. (2014). The nature of interactions between Chinese immigrant families and preschool staff: How culture, class, and methodology matter. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 12*(2), 111–127.

- Henriksen, K. (2007). *Fakta om 18 innvandregrupper i Norge (Facts about 18 immigrant groups in Norway)*. SSB report, 29.
- Heymans, M. W., & Eekhout, I. (2019). *Applied missing data analysis with SPSS and (R) Studio*.
<https://bookdown.org/mwheyman/bookmi/multiple-imputation.html#multiple-imputation-in-r>
- Howard, K. M., & Lipinoga, S. (2010). Closing down openings: Pretextuality and misunderstanding in parent–teacher conferences with Mexican immigrant families. *Language & Communication, 30*(1), 33–47.
- Hujala, E., Turja, L., Gaspar, M. F., Veisson, M., & Waniganayake, M. (2009). Perspectives of early childhood teachers on parent–teacher partnerships in five European countries. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17*(1), 57–76.
- IBM Corp. (2019). *IBM SPSS Statistics for Windows, Version 26.0*. Armonk, IBM Corp.
- Israel, M., & Hay, I. (2006). *Research ethics for social scientists*. Sage.
- Janssen, J., & Vandebroek, M. (2018). (De) Constructing parental involvement in early childhood curricular frameworks. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 26*(6), 813–832.
- Johnson, R. B., Onwuegbuzie, A. J., & Turner, L. A. (2007). Toward a definition of mixed methods research. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research, 1*(2), 112–133.

- Khalfaoui, A., García-Carrión, R., & Villardón-Gallego, L. (2020). Bridging the gap: Engaging Roma and migrant families in early childhood education through trust-based relationships. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 28(5), 701–711.
- Kolancali, P., & Melhuish, E. (2019). How family characteristics and migration shape home learning environment of Turkish children in the UK. *Integrative Report D2*, 5, 55.
- Krumpal, I. (2013). Determinants of social desirability bias in sensitive surveys: A literature review. *Quality & Quantity*, 47(4), 2025–2047.
- Krumsvik, R. J. (2016). *En doktorgradsutdanning i endring: Et fokus på den artikkelbaserte ph.d.-avhandlingen*. Fagbokforlaget.
- Langeloo, A., Mascareño Lara, M., Deunk, M. I., Klitzing, N. F., & Strijbos, J. W. (2019). A systematic review of teacher–child interactions with multilingual young children. *Review of Educational Research*, 89(4), 536–568.
- Lazzari, A., Balduzzi, L., Van Laere, K., Boudry, C., Rezek, M., & Prodger, A. (2020). Sustaining warm and inclusive transitions across the early years: Insights from the START project. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 28(1), 43–57.
- Libarkin, J. C., & Kurdziel, J. P. (2002). Research methodologies in science education: The qualitative-quantitative debate. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, 50(1), 78–86.
- Little, R. J. (1988). A test of missing completely at random for multivariate data with missing values. *Journal of the American Statistical Association*, 83(404), 1198–1202.
- Little, R. J., & Rubin, D. B. (2019). *Statistical analysis with missing data*. John Wiley & Sons.

- Lopez-Class, M., Cubbins, L., & Loving, A. M. (2016). Considerations of methodological approaches in the recruitment and retention of immigrant participants. *Journal of Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities*, 3(2), 267–280.
- Ma, X., Shen, J., Krenn, H. Y., Hu, S., & Yuan, J. (2016). A meta-analysis of the relationship between learning outcomes and parental involvement during early childhood education and early elementary education. *Educational Psychology Review*, 28(4), 771–801.
- Mary, L., & Young, A. S. (2017). Engaging with emergent bilinguals and their families in the pre-primary classroom to foster well-being, learning and inclusion. *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 17(4), 455-473.
- McLaughlin, R. H., & Alfaro-Velcamp, T. (2015). The vulnerability of immigrants in research: Enhancing protocol development and ethics review. *Journal of Academic Ethics*, 13(1), 27–43.
- McWayne, C., Hyun, S., Diez, V., & Mistry, J. (2021). “We feel connected ... and like we belong”: A parent-led, staff-supported model of family engagement in early childhood. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 1–13.
- Morrow, S. L. (2005). Quality and trustworthiness in qualitative research in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 52(2), 250–260.

- NESH. (2016). *Guidelines for research ethics in the social sciences, humanities, law and theology*. https://www.etikkom.no/globalassets/documents/english-publications/60127_fek_guidelines_nesh_digital_corr.pdf
- Paat, Y. F. (2013). Working with immigrant children and their families: An application of Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment, 23*(8), 954–966.
- Passaretta, G., & Skopek, J. (2018). *Roots and development of achievement gaps. A longitudinal assessment in selected European countries*. ISOTIS, D1.3. http://archive.isotis.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ISOTIS_D1.3-Roots-and-Development-of-Achievement-Gaps.pdf
- Pontier, R. W., Boruchowski, I. D., & Olivo, L. I. (2020). Dynamic language use in bi/multilingual early childhood education contexts. *Journal of Culture and Values in Education, 3*(2), 158–178.
- Pulinx, R., Van Avermaet, P., & Agirdag, O. (2017). Silencing linguistic diversity: The extent, the determinants and consequences of the monolingual beliefs of Flemish teachers. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 20*(5), 542–556.
- Romijn, B. R., Slot, P. L., Leseman, P. P. M., & Pagani, V. (2020). Teachers' self-efficacy and intercultural classroom practices in diverse classroom contexts: A cross-national comparison. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 79*, 58–70.

- Rubin, D. B. (1987). *Multiple imputation for nonresponse in surveys*. Wiley.
- Råde, A. (2020). The involved, engaged or partnership parents in early childhood education and care. *Universal Journal of Educational Research, 8*(7), 2833–2841.
- Sandelowski, M. (2008). Reading, writing and systematic review. *Journal of Advanced Nursing, 64*(1), 104–110.
- Schwartz, M., & Deeb, I. (2021). Toward a better understanding of the language conducive context: An ecological perspective on children’s progress in the second language in bilingual preschool. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 24*(4), 481–499.
- Shor, R. (2007). Professionals’ approach towards discipline in educational systems as perceived by immigrant parents: The case of immigrants from the former Soviet Union in Israel. *Early Child Development and Care, 175*(5), 457–465.
- Simon, B. S., & Epstein, J. L. (2001). School, family, and community partnerships. In D. Hiatt-Michael (Ed.), *Promising practices for family involvement in schools* (pp. 1–84). Information Age Publishing.
- Slot, P. L., Romijn, B. R., Cadima, J., Nata, G., & Wyslowska, O. (2018). *Internet survey among staff working in formal and informal (education) sectors in ten European countries*. ISOTIS.

- Smith, J. (2020). Teachers' perspectives on communication and parent engagement in early childhood education programs for migrant farmworker children. *Journal of Early Childhood Research, 18*(2), 115–129.
- Sohn, S., & Wang, X. C. (2006). Immigrant parents' involvement in American schools: Perspectives from Korean mothers. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 34*(2), 125–132.
- Sousa, D. (2014). Validation in qualitative research: General aspects and specificities of the descriptive phenomenological method. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 11*(2), 211–227.
- Statistics Norway. (2020). *Nesten 15% er innvandrere (Almost 15% are immigrants)*. <https://www.ssb.no/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/nesten-15-prosent-er-innvandrere>
- Steinbock, B. (2006). Defining parenthood. In M. Freeman (Ed.), *Children's health and children's rights* (pp. 311–334). Martinus Nijhoff Publishers.
- Sønsthagen, A. G. (2020). Early childcare as arenas of inclusion: The contribution of staff to recognising parents with refugee backgrounds as significant stakeholders. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28*(3), 304–318.
- Tobin, J. (2020). Addressing the needs of children of immigrants and refugee families in contemporary ECEC settings: Findings and implications from the children crossing borders study. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 28*(1), 10–20.

- Turney, K., & Kao, G. (2009). Barriers to school involvement: Are immigrant parents disadvantaged? *The Journal of Educational Research, 102*(4), 257–271.
- Vandenbroeck, M., Roets, G., & Snoeck, A. (2009). Immigrant mothers crossing borders: Nomadic identities and multiple belongings in early childhood education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 17*(2), 203–216.
- Van Laere, K., Van Houtte, M., & Vandenbroeck, M. (2018). Would it really matter? The democratic and caring deficit in “parental involvement.” *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 26*(2), 187–200.
- Whitmarsh, J. (2011). Othered voices: Asylum-seeking mothers and early years education. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal, 19*(4), 535–551.
- Wolf, K. D. (2018). Stakeholders’ opinions of quality in Norwegian kindergartens. *Early Years, 41*(4), 336–352.
- Yahya, R. (2016). Bridging home and school: Understanding immigrant mothers’ cultural capital and concerns about play-based learning. *Early Years, 36*(4), 340–342.

Part II

The papers

Paper I

Norheim, H., & Moser, T. (2020). Barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC: A review based on empirical research. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 28(6) 1–17.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2020.1836582>



Barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC: a review based on empirical research

Helga Norheim & Thomas Moser

To cite this article: Helga Norheim & Thomas Moser (2020) Barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC: a review based on empirical research, *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 28:6, 789-805, DOI: [10.1080/1350293X.2020.1836582](https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2020.1836582)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/1350293X.2020.1836582>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 22 Oct 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1410



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Barriers and facilitators for partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC: a review based on empirical research

Helga Norheim and Thomas Moser

Department of Educational Science, Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science, University of South-Eastern Norway, Kongsberg, Norway

ABSTRACT

Partnerships between parents and professionals in early childhood education and care (ECEC) are widely acknowledged as important for children's well-being and learning. For children with immigrant backgrounds, bridges between the different social contexts that surround them are especially significant. The current paper synthesizes research-based knowledge on the barriers to and facilitators of partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. This overview review includes 25 articles that comprise qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods studies. The most frequently identified barriers include language, asymmetrical power relations and cultural differences and disagreements. This research suggests approaches to facilitate partnerships, such as employing bilingual staff, using translators for parent-teacher conferences when needed, translating materials into different family languages, translanguaging, taking time and showing patience and respect. Finally, to ensure that all parents feel comfortable to express their views, more creative strategies from the professionals might be needed.

KEYWORDS

Partnership; collaboration; parents; professionals; early childhood education; immigrant

Partnerships between parents and professionals¹ in early childhood education and care (ECEC²) are widely acknowledged as important for children's well-being, learning and development (Epstein 2018). In Europe, 94% of all children attend ECEC before starting in primary education (Eurostat 2018), and the bridges between the different social contexts that surround a child are crucial for the child's positive development (Bronfenbrenner and Morris 2007). Family background is a strong predictor of children's educational opportunities (Levels, Dronkers, and Kraaykamp 2008), and in Europe, persistent educational disadvantages are found for immigrant groups (Passaretta and Skopek 2018). Studies have shown that parents with immigrant backgrounds may experience interactions with ECEC-professionals as challenging (Cheatham and Santos 2011). To develop inclusive practices with diverse families in ECEC, there is a need for research-

CONTACT Helga Norheim  Helga.norheim@usn.no  Department of Educational Science, Faculty of Humanities, Sports and Educational Science, University of South-Eastern Norway, Post Office Box 235, 3603 Kongsberg, Norway

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

based knowledge about the experiences of families with immigrant backgrounds and the professionals who work with them. The current review aims to synthesize the research on the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC and to identify the barriers to and facilitators of creating inclusive partnerships. This knowledge is a crucial prerequisite to provide better policies and practices to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children in increasingly multicultural European countries. The following research question was posed to address this aim:

What are the barriers to and facilitators of the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care?

In the literature on relationships between parents and professionals, a variety of concepts are used to describe different aspects and the nature of how parents and professionals co-construct children's learning and caregiving environment. The current paper focuses on *parent-professional partnerships*, a designation that can be seen as an extension of parental involvement (Simon and Epstein 2001). The concept of *parental involvement* gained prominence in the 60's (Epstein 1996) and can be described as 'the resources that parents invest in their child's learning experience' (Calzada et al. 2015). However, this concept has been operationalized in several different ways in the literature (Fan and Chen 2001; Carreón, Drake, and Barton 2005). A variety of parental practices has been described as parental involvement, such as parental aspirations for their children's achievement, communication with professionals, communication with their children about ECEC, and involvement in ECEC activities (Fan and Chen 2001). Epstein's (2018) widely used typology of involvement includes parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making and collaborating with the community. The term partnership extends this and focuses on how the two main microsystems in which a child is developing and learning – namely, at home and in ECEC – work together to bridge the contexts, create coherence in children's learning and caregiving environment, and build on each other's resources. The concept of parental involvement often focuses on the role of the parents, whereas parent-professional partnerships expands the focus and assigns equal status to parents and professionals as co-constructors of the child's learning environment. Thus, the term *partnerships* includes involvement, engagement, participation and collaboration (Epstein 2018). To create inclusive partnerships with parents, professionals must know how to communicate with diverse groups of parents in ways that build mutual respect and trust (Epstein 2013). This understanding of partnerships recognizes that the different stakeholders share responsibility for children's learning and development (Simon and Epstein 2001).

The current paper draws on Epstein's (1987) theory of overlapping spheres of influence, which is inspired by Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological model. Epstein's theory emphasizes a holistic approach where schools, families and communities work closely together and locate the child in the center. The different spheres can either be pushed together or pulled apart by time, characteristics, philosophies or the practices of the family or the school (Epstein 2018). In a partnership, schools create family-like environments, where a child's individuality is recognized. Schools include children and families from diverse backgrounds, and families in these partnerships create school-like families that recognize, encourage and support children's educational paths.

For the purpose of this review, the term *parent-professional partnerships* is used to focus specifically on these two stakeholders' roles in co-constructing young children's learning and caregiving environment. The term *partnerships* is used to emphasize that both partners (parents and professionals) have equal status. The review takes a broad approach towards parent-professional partnerships and focuses on the overlapping spheres between ECEC and the home, including research on involvement, collaboration, communication, engagement and participation.

Studying partnerships across cultures

Currently, for ECEC-professionals in many countries, working with culturally and linguistically diverse families constitutes their everyday practice. This requires extended competence and knowledge (Park and Vandekerckhove 2016) and is considered an inherent part of ECEC professionalism (Nikoloudaki et al. 2018). Nonetheless, many European countries do not have a curriculum that sufficiently prepares professionals to create partnerships with parents from different cultures (Nikoloudaki et al. 2018) and little is known about how European teacher education programs prepares their students for working with families (Willemse et al. 2016). Furthermore, the factors that influence the partnerships between professionals and parents with immigrant backgrounds have not been studied sufficiently (Carreón, Drake, and Barton 2005; Durand 2011). Cultural differences in the nature of relationships between parents and professionals in ECEC – both between and within countries (Hujala et al. 2009) – may result in differences in experiences and expectations towards one another regarding the purpose, content and form of a partnership. Analysis of curricular frameworks for ECEC reveal quite diverse understandings of the concept of parental involvement (Janssen and Vandenbroeck 2018). Teachers have different statuses and roles across countries, and the role of the parents in the partnerships appears to vary (Hujala et al. 2009). As partnerships vary among countries and cultures, immigrant parents will often face expectations from professionals that are different from what they would have expected in the educational system in their home culture. Thus, immigrant parents often face the challenge of navigating both cultural and linguistic codes within the educational system in the host country. Furthermore, immigrants in Europe are at a higher risk of having a lower socioeconomic status (Eurostat 2018), and a substantial amount of evidence suggests that parental socioeconomic status is related to parental involvement in their child's education (Turney and Kao 2009; Calzada et al. 2015; Liu, Zhang, and Jiang 2020). As such, different risk factors seem to be intertwined for many parents with immigrant backgrounds who currently live in Europe. It is therefore necessary to investigate how professionals and parents with immigrant backgrounds experience their partnerships to specifically identify the barriers that immigrant parents face and how professionals can facilitate inclusive partnerships with these parents – pushing these two overlapping spheres together for the benefit of children who often face both cultural and linguistic differences between their two most significant microsystems. The purpose of this review is to create an overview of the existing knowledge on the barriers to and facilitators of partnerships between professionals and parents with immigrant backgrounds in ECEC and to map the areas that still need more research within this field.

Methods

To synthesize the research on the barriers to and facilitators of the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC, we conducted an overview review (Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou 2016; Krumsvik 2016). An overview review reflects a systematic and comprehensive approach, although it is not exhaustive, and it allows for inclusion of both qualitative and quantitative studies (Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou 2016; Krumsvik 2016). Furthermore, this approach allows for a thematic analysis and a narrative dissemination (Booth, Sutton, and Papaioannou 2016), which suits the purpose of this review and the diversity of the empirical studies that it covers.

Search procedure

The first step in the review process was initial scoping searches, which helped guide and define the scope of the review. This process led to the inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 1) and the development of the search terms (see Table 2). As the current paper focuses on early educational partnerships, specifically between professionals and parents with immigrant backgrounds, empirical and peer-reviewed articles on this topic were included. The studies that focus on partnerships in grades where children are older than 8 years were excluded, as the focus of this review is on partnerships in the early years of children's lives, and the nature of educational partnerships often changes with the child's age (Cooper, Lindsay, and Nye 2000). The searches were conducted in the databases of Academic Search Premier and ERIC, as these were considered to cover most journals within the field of education. Due to the rapid changes both within the field of ECEC and in global immigration patterns, we considered up-to-date empirical research on the topic to be most relevant for the purpose of this review, and the timeframe was set to articles published between 2000 and 2018.

In some of the reviewed articles, it was not clearly specified whether the sample consisted of parents with immigrant backgrounds; these articles often used terms such as diverse or multicultural to describe their sample. Thus, for the purpose of this review, we used the home language as an indicator of immigrant background in these articles,

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria.

	Included	Excluded
Databases	Academic Search Premier, ERIC	
Timeframe	2000–2018	Studies published before 2000 and after 2018
Publication type	Online accessible peer-reviewed articles	Text books, gray literature
Focus	Empirical studies, based on qualitative and/or quantitative data that focus on the partnerships between ECEC-professionals and parents from families with immigrant backgrounds	Non-empirical articles, non-peer reviewed articles
Language	English	Other languages
Target population	Articles that focus on staff and/or parents' perspectives and experiences	Articles that focus on teacher education, school leadership, children with special needs, indigenous families
Target teaching level	Kindergarten, preschool, early childhood education and care; children from birth to compulsory school age	Primary school, secondary school, higher education

Table 2. Search terms.

		OR	OR	OR	OR
	Parents	Families	Mothers	Fathers	
AND	Early childhood education	Preschool	Kindergarten	Child care	
AND	Ethnic diversity	Minority	Immigrant		
AND	Staff	Professionals	Teachers	Educators	
AND	Communication	Collaboration	Cooperation	Relationship	Partnership

and we assumed that the groups with a different home language than the majority language, which were also described as diverse or multicultural, were likely to have an immigrant background.

The search procedure was conducted in three stages. The first search stage was conducted in Academic Search Premier and ERIC in the fall of 2018. Different combinations of the search terms (see Table 3) were used. This first search resulted in 143 articles of which 47 were considered to be relevant after reading the titles and abstracts. All 47 articles were then read in full text and evaluated against the inclusion criteria. At this stage, 19 articles met the inclusion criteria. The second stage of searching comprised what Krumsvik (2016) calls the ancestry approach; we used citations from the 19 studies identified in the first stage to find relevant previous studies not identified in the first search stage. In this stage, seven additional articles were included in the review. The last stage comprised hand searches and resulted in one additional article. In a total, 27 articles formed the basis of the quality assessment.

Quality assessment

To assess the quality of the studies that met the inclusion criteria, the trustworthiness of the results was assessed for each article by the two authors independently. This process was guided by predetermined quality criteria (see Table 4). Two sets of quality criteria were applied, which depended on the type of data in the study; one set of criteria was for studies with qualitative data, and one set of criteria was for studies with quantitative data. Different criteria were applied depending on the type of data to acknowledge that research should be assessed with reference to the paradigm and epistemology that frame it (Morrow 2005; Sousa 2014). For the quantitative studies, we assessed *validity*, *reliability* and *generalizability* (Carrig and Hoyle 2011), and for the qualitative studies, we assessed the *trustworthiness of the method*, the *coherence of the results* (Hill, Thompson, and Williams 1997), and the *transferability and application of the results* (Sousa 2014).

Table 3. Search results.

	Results	Potentially relevant (after reading abstract)	Fulfilled inclusion criteria (after full text reading)	Included in review (after quality assessment)
Academic Search Premier and ERIC	143	47	19	18
Manual search (based on the references in the relevant articles)	15	15	7	6
Hand search		1	1	1
Total	158	62	27	25

Table 4. Quality criteria for quantitative and qualitative studies.

Quantitative (Carrig and Hoyle 2011)	Qualitative (Sousa 2014; Leung 2015)
Validity	Trustworthiness of the method
Reliability	Coherence of the results
Generalizability	Transferability and application of the results

The studies that draw on quantitative methods were assessed by their clear and transparent descriptions regarding validity, reliability and generalizability. For these studies, this meant that we considered whether the instruments and measurements that were used were useful and properly applied (Carrig and Hoyle 2011). Furthermore, researchers should adequately evaluate whether their observed sample is representative of the defined universe (Kane 1996; Carrig and Hoyle 2011). For the studies that draw on qualitative data, the methods were considered to be trustworthy when articles comprised clear and rigorous descriptions of the methodological steps in the research process (Sousa 2014). The methodology had to be appropriate to study the research topic and to answer the research questions. Furthermore, the data should be adequate to investigate the research topic. For the results to be assessed as coherent, the findings and conclusions should be clearly rooted in the data, and the researchers should describe how the material was systematized and analyzed and how they came to their conclusions. Transferability of the results reflects on furthering the knowledge about the subject of the study and generating new theory, new understandings or new perspectives of the phenomenon (Sousa 2014). The applicability of the results should be addressed by the researchers, and they should assess the extent to which the results from their study can be analytically generalized to other situations (Kvale 1996). In total, 25 out of the 27 articles were included in the review after this quality assessment.

Limitations

The current review is not an exhaustive review and therefore does not claim to cover all relevant research articles. Furthermore, the current review only includes articles written in English and is dominated by papers from Anglo-Saxon countries, which might give a skewed picture and should be considered by readers. Arguably, the volume of research on this topic in other languages is larger, and it would have been valuable to include these. Unfortunately, this was not feasible within this project.

Sample description

A variation of methodologies was applied in the 25 articles included in this review. Qualitative methods were used in 15 (60%) of the studies, eight (33%) of the studies used quantitative methods, and the remaining were mixed methods studies. A majority of the studies originated in the US ($n = 13$, 52%), followed by Europe ($n = 7$, 28%), with the rest of the studies originating in New Zealand, Australia, Canada and Israel. The most researched immigrant group was families with Latino backgrounds who live in the US and Canada ($n = 10$, 40%), followed by Asian immigrant families in the US, Europe, New Zealand, Israel and Australia ($n = 8$, 33%). 11 of the included studies investigates the perspectives of the parents on the partnership, and nine studies focus on both

parents and professionals' perspectives or interactions. Three of the included studies focus on professionals, parents and children, and two studies focus on parental involvement and child outcomes.

Results & discussion

The current review investigates the research-based knowledge on the barriers to and facilitators of the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in early childhood education and care. The results are presented thematically, as the barriers to and facilitators of these partnerships often are intertwined, and they will be discussed in relation to one another. A significant proportion of the reviewed studies indicates that parents with immigrant backgrounds are less involved in their children's education and that they experience more barriers to creating partnerships with professionals than non-immigrant parents (Guo 2005; Huntsinger and Jose 2009; Turney and Kao 2009; Zhang, Keown, and Farruggia 2014). In the US, Chinese-American parents have been shown to be less involved in ECEC activities than European-American parents (Huntsinger and Jose 2009). Immigrant parents in the US were found to be much less likely to be involved in ECEC than native-born parents, even within one ethnic group (Turney and Kao 2009). Turney and Kao (2009) find that Asian and Hispanic immigrant parents particularly faced barriers to ECEC involvement in the US. A similar tendency is found in New Zealand, where Chinese immigrant parents were found to be significantly less involved than non-Chinese parents in all the types of parental involvement that were measured, namely, communication with professionals, volunteering to help in ECEC and participation in decision making (Zhang, Keown, and Farruggia 2014). Accordingly, barriers to creating partnerships with professionals were found for parents with immigrant backgrounds across different countries, continents and immigrant backgrounds (see, e.g. Guo 2005; Huntsinger and Jose 2009; Turney and Kao 2009; Zhang, Keown, and Farruggia 2014). However, the findings further suggest that there are differences in the significance and the nature of the barriers that different immigrant groups experience in ECEC involvement (Calzada et al. 2015).

In several studies, parents with diverse immigrant backgrounds expressed a wish to engage in a partnership with the professionals (Sohn and Wang 2006; Hachfeld et al. 2016; Van Laere, Van Houtte, and Vandebroek 2018). However, these parents experienced a lack of opportunity to communicate with the professionals (Sohn and Wang 2006; Shor 2007; Van Laere, Van Houtte, and Vandebroek 2018). In Germany, immigrant parents reported a stronger need for attunement with the professionals than German-speaking parents, and immigrant parents also rated parent-professional partnerships as more important than German-speaking parents (Hachfeld et al. 2016). However, the professional practices that promote parental involvement are predictive of both ECEC-based involvement (Calzada et al. 2015) and home-based involvement (Chang et al. 2009), which emphasize the importance of developing policies and practices that facilitate inclusive partnerships between educational professionals and parents with immigrant backgrounds. Furthermore, parents' satisfaction with ECEC contact has been found to be associated with family involvement in the US (McWayne, Campos, and Owsianik 2008). McWayne, Campos, and Owsianik (2008) found that parents to a higher degree were involved in ECEC-based activities and home-ECEC conferencing

when they were more satisfied with the contact. For Latino parents in the US, having a Latino teacher for their child was positively related to ECEC-based involvement; however, for Afro-Caribbean parents, ethnic consonance with their child's teacher showed no significant association with parental involvement in ECEC (Calzada et al. 2015).

Accordingly, the reviewed literature reveals a discrepancy between immigrant parents' wish to engage in educational partnerships on the one hand and measured levels of parental involvement, communication or decision making (see Sohn and Wang 2006; Turney and Kao 2009; Hachfeld et al. 2016) on the other hand. Evidently, parents with immigrant backgrounds experience barriers to creating partnerships with professionals, which indicates that there are often factors that pull the two spheres of influence apart. Immigrant parents' strong need for attunement with professionals (see Hachfeld et al. 2016) might indicate that these parents experience attunement with the professionals to a lesser extent, but it could also be caused by larger differences between these spheres for families with immigrant backgrounds and ECEC, which results in a greater need for bridging the contexts for the child. However, professionals' practices and parents' satisfaction with their relationship appear to matter. Not surprisingly, this finding indicates that how professionals meet and communicate with parents is important for promoting partnerships, which affirms the need to identify the specific barriers to creating partnerships and the factors that facilitate equal partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. In the reviewed literature, the most frequently identified barriers include language, asymmetrical power relations and cultural differences and disagreements, but the research further suggests some approaches to facilitate partnerships and overcome some of the challenges.

Language

Both parents and professionals acknowledge communication as the key to creating partnerships (De Gioia 2015). Thus, language is one of the main themes that emerges in the research on partnerships between parents and professionals in ECEC. Language barriers are the most frequently addressed theme in the research literature and are addressed in 67% of the studies (Guo 2005; Sohn and Wang 2006; McWayne, Campos, and Owsianik 2008; Turney and Kao 2009; Doland and Sherlock 2010; Howard and Lipinoga 2010; Durand 2011; Whitmarsh 2011; Cheatham and Jimenez-Silva 2012; Cheatham and Ostrosky 2013; Durand and Perez 2013; Winterbottom 2013; Heng 2014; Zhang, Keown, and Farruggia 2014; Calzada et al. 2015; Hachfeld et al. 2016). The reviewed studies reveal great variations in parents' language skills in the language of the host country. Some studies even identify language barriers as the most frequent challenge that parents face in their interaction with professionals, regardless of the length of their residency in the host country (Sohn and Wang 2006; Winterbottom 2013). In contrast, Turney and Kao (2009) suggest that minority status might play a greater role than language for immigrant families in the US, as White foreign-born parents were found to become more comfortable interacting with professionals as their English language ability became better. Moreover, this benefit was weaker for immigrants with Hispanic and Asian backgrounds. For many immigrants, however, these factors are intertwined, which demonstrates the complexity of the barriers that many immigrant families experience.

To facilitate communication and ease language barriers, professionals use several strategies. Bilingual educators and staff members were found to be consciously employed to help children and families in a number of studies (e.g. Heng 2014; De Gioia 2015). The use of translators in parent-teacher conferences appears to vary; some studies find that translators are used systematically (Howard and Lipinoga 2010; Cheatham and Ostrosky 2013; Heng 2014), while other studies show that parents who experience language barriers are not provided any interpreter services (Sohn and Wang 2006; Turney and Kao 2009). Furthermore, signs, materials and newsletters translated into the home languages are provided by some ECEC centers to ease language barriers (Howard and Lipinoga 2010; Whitmarsh 2011).

Bilingual staff and resources in the families' home language are often regarded as the best practice in the work with families with immigrant backgrounds (Whitmarsh 2011). However, as there might be more languages represented in one setting than there are staff, it might be difficult to accommodate all languages equally. Whitmarsh (2011) found that the resources in the majority language in the settings (in her study, Farsi), contributed to a feeling of neglect for mothers who spoke other languages. For the parents who could not draw any benefits from the bilingual staff, some even perceived this as a disadvantage for their children, as they wanted their children to learn English from native English speakers, and the English spoken by the bilingual staff was not perceived as 'good English' (Whitmarsh 2011).

Even parents who have become relatively fluent speakers of the language of the host country experience language barriers due to challenges with the educational language and specialized terms (Sohn and Wang 2006; Howard and Lipinoga 2010). These parents often do not have first-hand experiences with the educational system of the host country, and this might add to the difficulties of decoding the meaning of the specialized educational language, which constitutes a double language barrier for parents with immigrant backgrounds. Thus, to allow time for clarifications, second language speakers might need more time allotted for parent-teacher conferences than native speakers who are familiar with the contextual language. Korean mothers in the US expressed that the time allotted for conferences was too limited and that the time in the daily situations was not sufficient to communicate with the professionals (Sohn and Wang 2006), which led to a lack of opportunities for the mothers to communicate with the professionals.

Another notable finding across the studies is that parents with immigrant backgrounds experience a lack of sensitiveness and patience from professionals in regard to language. In Sohn and Wang's (2006) study, a Korean mother living in the US expressed that 'teachers tend to regard non-English speakers as unintelligent people.' Sohn and Wang (2006) ascertain that mothers experience professionals as quite impatient and irritated when they do not understand the immigrant mothers' English. In Whitmarsh's (2011) study, this is illustrated by an experience of a higher educated immigrant mother who had asked a professional about a pronunciation in the English alphabet that she needed to help her child with homework and was met with this response, 'But you *must* know how to do it. You *must* know the alphabet.' This experience added to this mother's feeling of marginalization and led to her decision to never meet with her child's teacher again (Whitmarsh 2011). Heng's (2014) findings also support this and suggest that professionals interact differently with parents depending on their

economic-cultural-linguistic capital. The professionals in Heng's (2014) study took more initiative and were more welcoming towards parents who were more familiar with the middle-class American culture than most of the Chinese immigrant parents. The professionals in this study mostly communicated in a one-directional and didactic way, for example, giving parents instructions and informing them about appropriate behavior and rules (Heng 2014).

In the ethnographic study of a multilingual classroom in France, Mary and Young (2017) found that the teacher used translanguaging to scaffold children's learning and to create bridges between ECEC and the home. Translanguaging refers to the systematic use of two languages for schooling (Mary and Young 2017). In this study, the professional invited the parents into the classroom to create safe spaces for both children and parents. This opportunity was used to establish contact with the parents and to ask questions about their home language(s). The professional was a native French speaker, who spoke no other languages fluently, but who after years of experience with bilingual Turkish-speaking children, had acquired the skills to support children through translanguaging. This study exemplifies how monolingual professionals can work to foster well-being, learning and inclusion for multilingual children and their parents in their classrooms.

Finally, a communication barrier that emerged from the reviewed studies is indirectly related to language via the children. Some studies suggest that as children sometimes get frustrated in the process of learning their second language in ECEC, parents often experience a lack of understanding from professionals, and this can lead to challenges in their relationship from the parents' perspective (Shor 2007; Whitmarsh 2011). In Shor's (2007) study, approximately one-quarter of the respondents experienced conflicts with professionals related to what they perceived as a lack of consideration of immigration-related factors, such as language.

Obviously, communication plays a pivotal role in a partnership, and the various language barriers that parents with immigrant backgrounds experience should be acknowledged. The literature manifests diverse forms of language-related barriers, even for parents with longer residence in the host country. The reviewed literature also reveals that the professionals apply a variety of strategies to overcome language barriers and facilitate communication. Accordingly, promising practices include employing bilingual staff, using translators for parent-teacher conferences when needed, translating materials into different family languages, translanguaging, taking time and showing patience and respect. However, there is a need to be cautious about the balance between the materials and staff provided to aid barriers in the different languages represented in a classroom to avoid reinforcing the feeling of being a minority (even among other minorities). Furthermore, parents are often concerned about their child learning the national language of the host country fluently, which might constitute a dilemma for some ECEC leaders, as bilingual staff are often not native speakers of the language of the host country, and in these cases, different benefits must be balanced with one another. Lastly, the literature shows the importance of remembering that even for quite fluent speakers of the language of the host country, specialized educational language might constitute a double language barrier.

Asymmetrical power relations

Asymmetrical power in the relationship between parents and professionals emerges as a barrier to creating partnerships across several of the studies in this review (Guo 2005; Vandebroek, Roets, and Snoeck 2009; Howard and Lipinoga 2010; Whitmarsh 2011; Cheatham and Jimenez-Silva 2012; Cheatham and Ostrosky 2013; Heng 2014; Van Laere, Van Houtte, and Vandebroek 2018). This asymmetry often appears as a perception of the professionals as experts, a view that is expressed by both parents and the professionals themselves (Guo 2005; Cheatham and Ostrosky 2013). In a parent-teacher conference setting, Cheatham and Jimenez-Silva (2012) found that the teacher and the teacher's assistant spoke over 80% of the words in the conference, and the authors argue that this implies partnership difficulties. Furthermore, Cheatham and Ostrosky (2013) comparison of parent-teacher conferences between native Spanish-speaking, Latino bilingual and native English-speaking parents in the US reveal that the professionals spoke the most and asked least often for the parents' goals for their children during the conferences with the native Spanish-speaking parents compared to the native English speakers and Latino bilingual parents. Both parents and professionals in this study expressed that they viewed the professional's role as the expert (Cheatham and Ostrosky 2013). Howard and Lipinoga (2010) emphasize that the institutional encounters between the professionals and parents involve an asymmetry of expertise. They note that immigrant parents have unequal familiarity with the genre of parent-teacher conferences, an important arena for the creation of partnerships between parents and professionals. This unequal familiarity with the parent-teacher conference genre may manifest unequal access to power and might result in misunderstandings (Howard and Lipinoga 2010).

Whitmarsh's (2011) interviews with asylum-seeking mothers in the UK revealed that they view the professionals as experts in educational matters and that their role as mothers includes preparing the child for ECEC. Whitmarsh (2011) claims that this is inhibiting of partnerships and emphasizes that the notion of the professionals as experts appears to be a cross-cultural conception. Although the notion of the professionals as experts might be found across cultures, the nature of how this is manifested in the dynamic of the relationships might be more culture-specific. Consistent with previous findings, Durand and Perez (2013) notice that in the US, Latino parents question professionals about their practices, advocate for certain issues or ask for clarifications to a lesser extent than White parents with a higher socioeconomic background. In Guo's (2005) study from New Zealand, the Asian immigrant parents either express that they do not want to collaborate with the professionals or that they do not know how to take an active role in ECEC settings. One informant expresses it like this: 'I would like to do something but don't think I can contribute too much' (Guo 2005). In contrast, the professionals describe the Asian immigrant parents as 'respectful, interested but passive,' and the professionals do not feel confident in working with the Asian immigrant parents (Guo 2005). Furthermore, the professionals express that time constraints are an obstacle for spending time with the Asian immigrant parents.

Evidently, both parents and professionals often appear to view the professional as the expert, and the experienced asymmetrical power in relationships between parents and professionals is viewed by several researchers as problematic for building partnerships.

Drawing on the understanding that educational partnerships are based on an equal status between parents and professionals as co-constructors of children's learning and caregiving environment, asymmetrical power within these relationships is problematic. Although most of the studies find asymmetrical power relationships to be a barrier in creating partnerships between parents and professionals in ECEC, there are also other approaches to this topic. As one of the informants in Vandenbroeck, Roets, and Snoeck's (2009, 208) study mentions, 'different "expertise" does not necessarily imply a hierarchy of knowledges.' Vandenbroeck, Roets, and Snoeck (2009) emphasize that it is possible for professionals to respect and embrace the perspectives of parents without fully understanding them, and they thus advocate that 'good practice' cannot be essentialized. Emphasizing the difference in expertise between parents and professionals might be a fruitful approach, as they both bring important perspectives and experiences from different areas of children's lives into their conversation with each other.

Culture and disagreements

In the reviewed studies, disagreements between parents and professionals appeared in relation to several topics, such as discipline (Shor 2007; Bernhard et al. 2004), pedagogy and practice (De Gioia 2015) and educational goal setting (Cheatham and Ostrosky 2013; Döge and Keller 2014). Disagreements by themselves might not necessarily hinder partnerships, but disagreements require trust and communication to be resolved. Parents with immigrant backgrounds largely seem to be hesitant to approach disagreements with professionals in a confronting manner, and this finding seems to be evident across different immigrant groups, such as Chinese (Heng 2014), Korean (Sohn and Wang 2006), and Latino (Howard and Lipinoga 2010) immigrant groups.

Disagreements regarding professionals' approaches to discipline is found among parents with immigrant backgrounds (Bernhard et al. 2004; Shor 2007). However, the topics of the disagreements seem to be more culture-specific. In Bernhard et al.'s (2004) study on the perceptions on discipline of Latino parents living in the US, the findings suggest that parents perceived professionals as overly bureaucratic and impersonal. They reported that children were punished for what parents perceived as minor offences and that professionals comply with absolute rules and regulations, without them seeming to be interested in the child as a person (Bernhard et al. 2004). In contrast, immigrant parents from the former Soviet Union (FSU) living in Israel felt that professionals were too tolerant of misbehavior (Shor 2007). Common for both groups, however, was that parents expressed disagreement with professionals when children were expelled or suspended from ECEC (Bernhard et al. 2004; Shor 2007). Parents felt that this was a punishment that did not consider the child's learning and academic future (Bernhard et al. 2004; Shor 2007).

In a study of Chinese immigrant parents living in the US, Heng (2014) finds that parents downplay their own needs, often to avoid conflict and maintain harmony. On the occasions that the parents had approached staff, they indicated disappointment with the follow-ups from ECEC and thus perceived little point in expressing their feedback. Parents further mentioned that differences between ECEC in China and the US make it difficult for them to know what to expect and, thus, how to react. The lack of dialogue between the Chinese immigrant parents and the professionals results in

assumptions among professionals that the Chinese immigrant parents ‘Don’t know’ or even ‘Don’t care’ (Heng 2014). Sohn and Wang (2006) found that cultural differences between Korean and American ECEC made the notion of equal partnerships between Korean mothers and the professionals challenging. The Korean mothers were hesitant about asking for clarifications or voicing their own opinions to the professionals. Although they have opinions about their child’s education, they often keep these opinions to themselves as a demonstration of respect for the professionals’ authority (Sohn and Wang 2006). The Korean mothers acknowledged that they were listened to by the professionals, but as one mother noted, this made her confused about her ‘role and attitude towards teachers in American schools and sometimes it makes me uncomfortable’ (Sohn and Wang 2006, 129). Furthermore, ECEC visits, which are often used as an indicator of involvement, are not encouraged as much in Korea as in the US. Thus, the cultural differences seem to equip the professionals and the immigrant parents with rather different expectations towards one another.

Despite the different nature of the disagreements that parents with immigrant backgrounds experience with professionals, the role of the professional as the expert appear to inhibit parents from expressing their opinions to the professionals. The asymmetric power relations between parents and professionals seem to add to the difficulties in creating partnerships based on equality between both parties. However, this might not always be visible to the professionals, as parents might appear to be polite and satisfied. Thus, there might be a need for more creative strategies from the professionals to ensure that all parents feel comfortable to express their views.

Summary and conclusions

This paper investigates the barriers to and facilitators of the partnerships between parents with immigrant backgrounds and professionals in ECEC. For many young children in Europe currently, family and ECEC constitute the two most significant microsystems in their lives, and parents and professionals play pivotal roles as co-constructors of children’s learning and caregiving environment. For immigrant children, cultural and linguistic differences between the microsystems might be of greater significance than for children without an immigrant background. These children will often need to develop diverse linguistic and cultural competence within two or even more contexts, which means that their support needs to exceed what parents or professionals can sufficiently provide on their own. Therefore, bridging the different contexts and moving the different spheres of influence together is essential; thus, creating partnerships with all parents is an imperative task for professionals in ECEC. To develop inclusive partnership practices, knowledge about the specific barriers that immigrant parents face – and about promising practices to facilitate partnerships – are crucial.

Overall, the barriers that parents with immigrant backgrounds are facing in their relationships with their children’s ECEC professionals are complex and intertwined. Immigrant parents express a strong wish to communicate and to be attuned with the professionals. Moreover, the literature clearly indicates that the professionals’ practices that include parents matter. However, as Epstein (2018) argues, the two spheres of influence might be pulled apart by different characteristics, philosophies and practices. For parents with immigrant backgrounds and ECEC professionals, the main factors responsible for

this pulling apart are related to language, asymmetrical power relations, culture and disagreements. From a partnership perspective, the asymmetry that is often found in relationships between parents and professionals is particularly worrisome. Equality and shared responsibility are key in partnerships (Epstein 2018), and an imbalance in power between parents and professionals may inhibit parents from participation and from voicing their opinions. Furthermore, professionals might lack the potential benefits provided by the combined efforts and shared educational goals between both parties. Both parents and professionals have experiences with the child that the other party does not possess, and acknowledging each other as significant resources in the child's life is arguably fruitful. Several strategies to facilitate partnerships have been emphasized, and the most common strategy for most of them appears to be understanding that partnerships take time, effort and patience.

The theoretical notion of *partnerships* between parents and professionals based on the equality between the partners is not new (see, e.g. Epstein 1996). Nevertheless, the research on partnerships between immigrant parents and professionals in ECEC still often revolves around parents and parental involvement (Heng 2014) and focuses on parents' characteristics and experiences rather than considering both perspectives equally. This focus is also evident in the current review. All of the studies in this review include data from parents in one form or another, whereas only approximately half of the studies (13) include data from the professionals. Assuming the importance of equal status in partnerships, this skewed focus in the research literature might be unfortunate. Considering the professionals' responsibility to facilitate partnerships, more knowledge is needed about what types of characteristics among professionals are associated with the ability to successfully create partnerships with parents with immigrant backgrounds. Furthermore, insights in the experiences of professionals who work with immigrant parents and their potential needs for professional development are useful topics for further investigation within this field. Lastly, only a few of the studies included in this review are experimental, which implies that there is still a lack of knowledge about the causal inferences within this field. Thus, we suggest a need for more research that provides knowledge about promising professional practices, the effects of interventions and professional development.

The current review has implications for several academic areas. In terms of professional training and development, the knowledge gained should be included in the pre- and in-service programs that prepare professionals for their work in increasingly hyper-diverse ECEC institutions. Furthermore, future research should include parental and professional perspectives to the same extent. Finally, intervention studies that apply various research designs, from design research to RCT studies, would be highly beneficial to provide context-sensitive knowledge about how to prevent and overcome the barriers to and developing facilitators of the partnerships between parents and professionals to the benefit of children's well-being and learning.

Notes

1. In this paper, professionals will be used to describe the staff who works directly with children in early childhood education and care.

2. In this article, early childhood education and care (ECEC) denotes all types of institutionalized education and care provided for children from birth to compulsory school age.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

References

- Bernhard, J. K., M. Freire, L. Bascunan, R. Arenas, N. R. Verga, and D. Gana. 2004. "Behaviour and Misbehaviour of Latino Children in a Time of Zero Tolerance: Mothers' Views." *Early Years* 24 (1): 49–62. doi:10.1080/0957514032000179052.
- Booth, A., A. Sutton, and D. Papaioannou. 2016. *Systematic Approaches to a Successful Literature Review*. London: Sage.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Bronfenbrenner, U., and P. A. Morris. 2007. "The Bioecological Model of Human Development." In *Handbook of Child Psychology*. Vol. 1 Theoretical Models of Human Development, edited by R. M. Lerner and W. Damon, 793–828. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.
- Calzada, E. J., K. Y. Huang, M. Hernandez, E. Soriano, C. F. Acra, S. Dawson-McClure, and L. Brotman. 2015. "Family and Teacher Characteristics as Predictors of Parent Involvement in Education During Early Childhood among Afro-Caribbean and Latino Immigrant Families." *Urban Education* 50 (7): 870–896.
- Carreón, G. P., C. Drake, and A. C. Barton. 2005. "The Importance of Presence: Immigrant Parents' School Engagement Experiences." *American Educational Research Journal* 42 (3): 465–498.
- Carrig, M. M., and R. H. Hoyle. 2011. "Measurement Choices: Reliability, Validity, and Generalizability." In *Handbook of Ethics in Quantitative Methodology*, edited by A. T. Panter and S. K. Sterba, 147–178. New York: Routledge.
- Chang, M., B. Park, K. Singh, and Y. Y. Sung. 2009. "Parental Involvement, Parenting Behaviors, and Children's Cognitive Development in Low-Income and Minority Families." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 23 (3): 309–324.
- Cheatham, G. A., and M. Jimenez-Silva. 2012. "Partnering with Latino Families During Kindergarten Transition: Lessons Learned from a Parent-Teacher Conference." *Childhood Education* 88 (3): 177–184.
- Cheatham, G. A., and M. M. Ostrosky. 2013. "Goal Setting During Early Childhood Parent-Teacher Conferences: A Comparison of Three Groups of Parents." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 27 (2): 166–189.
- Cheatham, G. A., and R. M. Santos. 2011. "Collaborating with Families from Diverse Cultural and Linguistic Backgrounds." *YC Young Children* 66 (5): 76.
- Cooper, H., J. J. Lindsay, and B. Nye. 2000. "Homework in the Home: How Student, Family, and Parenting-Style Differences Relate to the Homework Process." *Contemporary Educational Psychology* 25 (4): 464–487.
- De Gioia, K. 2015. "Immigrant and Refugee Mothers' Experiences of the Transition into Childcare: A Case Study." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 23 (5): 662–672.
- Döge, P., and H. Keller. 2014. "Similarity of Mothers' and Preschool Teachers' Evaluations of Socialization Goals in a Cross-Cultural Perspective." *Journal of Research in Childhood Education* 28 (3): 377–393.
- Doland, N., and C. Sherlock. 2010. "Family Support through Childcare Services: Meeting the Needs of Asylum-seeking and Refugee Families." *Child Care in Practice* 16 (2): 147–165. doi:10.1080/13575270903493382.
- Durand, T. M. 2011. "Latino Parental Involvement in Kindergarten: Findings from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 33 (4): 469–489.

- Durand, T. M., and N. A. Perez. 2013. "Continuity and Variability in the Parental Involvement and Advocacy Beliefs of Latino Families of Young Children: Finding the Potential for a Collective Voice." *School Community Journal* 23 (1): 49–79.
- Epstein, J. L. 1987. "Toward a Theory of Family-school Connections: Teacher Practices and Parent Involvement." In *Prevention and Intervention in Childhood and Adolescence*. Vol. 1 Social Intervention: Potential and Constraints, edited by K. Hurrelmann, F.-X. Kaufmann, and F. Lösel, 121–136. Berlin: Walter De Gruyter.
- Epstein, J. L. 1996. "Perspectives and Previews on Research and Policy for School, Family, and Community Partnerships." In *Family-school Links: How do They Affect Educational Outcomes*, edited by A. Booth and J. F. Dunn, 209–246. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Epstein, J. L. 2013. "Ready or not? Preparing Future Educators for School, Family, and Community Partnerships." *Teaching Education* 24 (2): 115–118.
- Epstein, J. L. 2018. *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Preparing Educators and Improving Schools*. New York: Routledge.
- Eurostat. 2018. Participation in Early Childhood Education. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/tgm/table.do?tab=table&init=1&language=en&code=tps00179&plugin=1>.
- Fan, X., and M. Chen. 2001. "Parental Involvement and Students' Academic Achievement: A Meta-Analysis." *Educational Psychology Review* 13 (1): 1–22.
- Guo, K. 2005. "Asian Immigrant Parents' and New Zealand Early Childhood Teachers' Views of Parent-Teacher Relationships." *New Zealand Research in Early Childhood Education* 8: 125.
- Hachfeld, A., Y. Anders, S. Kuger, and W. Smidt. 2016. "Triggering Parental Involvement for Parents of Different Language Backgrounds: The Role of Types of Partnership Activities and Preschool Characteristics." *Early Child Development and Care* 186 (1): 190–211.
- Heng, T. T. 2014. "The Nature of Interactions between Chinese Immigrant Families and Preschool Staff: How Culture, Class, and Methodology Matter." *Journal of Early Childhood Research* 12 (2): 111–127.
- Hill, C. E., B. J. Thompson, and E. N. Williams. 1997. "A Guide to Conducting Consensual Qualitative Research." *The Counseling Psychologist* 25 (4): 517–572.
- Howard, K. M., and S. Lipinoga. 2010. "Closing Down Openings: Pretextuality and Misunderstanding in Parent-Teacher Conferences with Mexican Immigrant Families." *Language & Communication* 30 (1): 33–47.
- Hujala, E., L. Turja, M. F. Gaspar, M. Veisson, and M. Waniganayake. 2009. "Perspectives of Early Childhood Teachers on Parent-Teacher Partnerships in Five European Countries." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 17 (1): 57–76.
- Huntsinger, C. S., and P. E. Jose. 2009. "Parental Involvement in Children's Schooling: Different Meanings in Different Cultures." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 24 (4): 398–410.
- Janssen, J., and M. Vandenbroeck. 2018. "(De) Constructing Parental Involvement in Early Childhood Curricular Frameworks." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 26 (6): 813–832.
- Kane, M. 1996. "The Precision of Measurements." *Applied Measurement in Education* 9 (4): 355–379.
- Krumsvik, R. J., ed. 2016. *En doktorgradsutdanning i endring: Et fokus på den artikkelbaserte ph. d.-avhandlingen*. Bergen: Fagbokforlaget.
- Kvale, S. 1996. *InterViews. An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. London: Sage.
- Leung, L. 2015. "Validity, Reliability, and Generalizability in Qualitative Research." *Journal of Family Medicine and Primary Care* 4 (3): 324.
- Levels, M., J. Dronkers, and G. Kraaykamp. 2008. "Immigrant Children's Educational Achievement in Western Countries: Origin, Destination, and Community Effects on Mathematical Performance." *American Sociological Review* 73 (5): 835–853.
- Liu, T., X. Zhang, and Y. Jiang. 2020. "Family Socioeconomic Status and the Cognitive Competence of Very Young Children from Migrant and non-Migrant Chinese Families: The Mediating Role of Parenting Self-Efficacy and Parental Involvement." *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 51: 229–241.

- Mary, L., and A. S. Young. 2017. "Engaging with Emergent Bilinguals and Their Families in the Pre-Primary Classroom to Foster Well-Being, Learning and Inclusion." *Language and Intercultural Communication* 17 (4): 455–473.
- McWayne, C., R. Campos, and M. Owsianik. 2008. "A Multidimensional, Multilevel Examination of Mother and Father Involvement among Culturally Diverse Head Start Families." *Journal of School Psychology* 46 (5): 551–573.
- Morrow, S. L. 2005. "Quality and Trustworthiness in Qualitative Research in Counseling Psychology." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 52 (2): 250–260.
- Nikoloudaki, E., E. Chlapana, K. Van Laere, G. Manolitsis, A. Vandekerckhove, and V. Grammatikopoulos. 2018. *Enhancing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care through Parent Participation: A State of Play in Seven European Countries*. <http://www.equap.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/Enhancing-quality-in-ECEC-state-of-play-AAVV.pdf>.
- Park, M., and A. Vandekerckhove. 2016. *Early Childhood Education and Services for All! Policy Recommendations Derived from the Forum*. Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation. https://bernardvanleer.org/app/uploads/2016/11/TFIEY_Policy_Recommendations_English.pdf.
- Passaretta, G., and J. Skopek, eds. 2018. *Roots and Development of Achievement Gaps. A Longitudinal Assessment in Selected European Countries*. ISOTIS Report (D1.3), Trinity College Dublin. http://www.isotis.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ISOTIS_D1.3-Roots-and-Development-of-Achievement-Gaps.pdf.
- Shor, R. 2007. "Professionals' Approach Towards Discipline in Educational Systems as Perceived by Immigrant Parents: The Case of Immigrants from the Former Soviet Union in Israel." *Early Child Development and Care* 175 (5): 457–465.
- Simon, B. S., and J. L. Epstein. 2001. "School, Family, and Community Partnerships." In *Promising Practices for Family Involvement in Schools*, edited by D. Hiatt-Michael, 1–84. Greenwich, CT: Information Age Publishing.
- Sohn, S., and X. C. Wang. 2006. "Immigrant Parents' Involvement in American Schools: Perspectives from Korean Mothers." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 34 (2): 125–132.
- Sousa, D. 2014. "Validation in Qualitative Research: General Aspects and Specificities of the Descriptive Phenomenological Method." *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 11 (2): 211–227.
- Turney, K., and G. Kao. 2009. "Barriers to School Involvement: Are Immigrant Parents Disadvantaged?" *The Journal of Educational Research* 102 (4): 257–271.
- Vandenbroeck, M., G. Roets, and A. Snoeck. 2009. "Immigrant Mothers Crossing Borders: Nomadic Identities and Multiple Belongings in Early Childhood Education." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 17 (2): 203–216.
- Van Laere, K., M. Van Houtte, and M. Vandenbroeck. 2018. "Would it Really Matter? The Democratic and Caring Deficit in 'Parental Involvement'." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 26 (2): 187–200.
- Whitmarsh, J. 2011. "Othered Voices: Asylum-Seeking Mothers and Early Years Education." *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal* 19 (4): 535–551.
- Willemse, T. M., L. Vloeberghs, E. J. de Bruine, and S. Van Eynde. 2016. "Preparing Teachers for Family-School Partnerships: A Dutch and Belgian Perspective." *Teaching Education* 27 (2): 212–228.
- Winterbottom, C. 2013. "Voices of the Minority: Japanese Immigrant Mothers' Perceptions of Preschools in the United States." *Early Childhood Education Journal* 41 (3): 219–225.
- Zhang, Q., L. Keown, and S. Farruggia. 2014. "Involvement in Preschools: Comparing Chinese Immigrant and Non-Chinese Parents in New Zealand." *International Research in Early Childhood Education* 5 (1): 64–82.

Paper II

Norheim, H., Broekhuizen, M., Moser, T. & Pastori, G. (in review) ECEC professionals' views on partnerships with parents in multicultural classrooms in four European countries.

Submitted to *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*.

Unpublished paper, omitted from online edition

Paper III

Norheim, H., Moser, T. & Broekhuizen, M. (resubmitted with minor revisions) Partnerships in Multicultural ECEC settings in Norway - Perspectives from parents and professionals.

Submitted to *Nordic Early Childhood Educational Research*.

Unpublished paper, omitted from online edition

Doctoral dissertation no. 117

2022

**Partnerships between parents with immigrant
backgrounds and professionals in early
childhood education and care**

Dissertation for the degree of PhD

Helga Norheim

ISBN: 978-82-7206-641-2 (print)

ISBN: 978-82-7206-642-9 (online)

usn.no

