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(Re)theorising More-than-parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education and Care

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There is no more complex and tender geography than the borderlands between families and schools. (Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2003, p. xi)

Preface: Engaging with Re-theorisation from an Ethically Entangled Standpoint

We are early childhood education researchers who have engaged in writing this book not from a sterile and objective stance, but from the ethically entangled perspective of early childhood education and care (ECEC), a perspective that is always intended to make the world a better place (Kamerman, 2006). Aware that making the world "better" may be related to very diverse values, we make the ones that constitute our standpoint transparent. They grow at the ground of our recognition of the urgent and complex sustainability challenges (Wals, 2012), forcing us to realise how co-dependent our existence is (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2019). These are: *the rights of the child, sustainability*, *superdiversity*, *agonism*, and *tender leadership*. Entangled with them, we engage in rethinking of conceptual tools employed to theorise the daily, family-home ecologies of ECEC. Below we present how each of the values is relevant for our engagement with parental involvement.

The Child's Right to Education, and the Child's Life with the Family

With respect to the rights of the child, parental involvement in the education and care institutions of their children becomes a social practice that emerges at the intersection of three rights of the child (UN, 1989) as stated in *Article 8*: the child's right to preserve family identity, *Article 9*: the child's right to not be separated from his or her own family unless the child's well-being and best interest requires this, and *Article 28*: the child's right to education.

Over 70 years after the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989) was adopted, children's rights to family identity and living in one's own family are still overseen by different institutions engaged in ensuring children's well-being and well-becoming (Višnjić Jevtić et al., 2021). For us, as ECEC researchers, the intersection of these rights implies the child's right to acknowledging communication, meaningful collaboration, and supportive partnerships between the ECEC setting and the child's family, as well as among all the families in the setting. We see the

period of early childhood as crucial for establishing parental trust in educational institutions and thus shaping the pattern of parental involvement in the next educational stages (McDowall et al., 2017). Ignoring parental input and not acknowledging the family as a resource for ECEC may in our view be interpreted as acts against the child's best interests.

Sustainability: Re-imagining Living Together

The UNESCO report on "The Contribution of Early Childhood to a Sustainable Society" (Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008) points out the role of ECEC in developing values, behaviours, and skills that are important for advancing sustainable attitudes and actions. However, it is still the environmental pillar of sustainability that dominates the sustainability-related discourse in the field of ECEC. This leads to a general agreement among scholars on the need to promote the social sustainability practiced through ECEC (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Elliott, 2017; Boldermo & Ødegaard, 2019; Davis & Elliott, 2014; Eriksen, 2013; Hägglund & Johansson, 2014; Samuelsson & Park, 2017).

ECEC's collaboration with parents, as well as its role as an arena for enhancing trust and connections among families, has great potential for social sustainability (Samuelsson & Kaga, 2008). These relationships hold for both the family's and ECEC's values that shape the social environment of ECEC (Višnjić-Jevtić et al., 2022), where families of diverse cultures can interact as resources for all children, negotiate, and also disagree (Vandenbroeck, 2009; Van Laere et al., 2018) as equal partners carrying the children's best interest. Creating such a social and communicative space "in which multiple, yet opposing, meanings can be discussed" (van Laere et al., 2018, p. 187) has the potential for community-based problem-solving (Wals, 1994) and the practice of equity and participation, regardless of differences involved (Eizenberg & Jabareen, 2017). ECEC and families come together in an act of "caring for the children we share" (Epstein, 2010, p. 81), and this can mitigate inequalities, power asymmetries, and participation obstacles generated in the macro-structures of society.

Believing in this sustainable potential implied in the social practice of parental involvement, we re-read and revisit the diverse theories included in this book, each of which enables the perception of inequities and injustice, but also possibilities for improvements.

Superdiversity

Although superdiversity is a sociological concept, the intention behind its creation can be seen as a social value. Vertovec (2007) developed the term to embrace the growing diversification of diversity, its complexity and dynamics, and all the "new conjunctions and interactions of variables [that] have arisen"

(p. 1026). In accounting for the emerging types of migration and mobility and possible social differences (e.g., social class, age, ethnicity, gender, and (dis) ability), Meissner and Vertovec (2014) focus on the individual trajectories across these differences, and their process of entering and becoming with and within different localities and communities (Meissner, 2016). Such an approach to diversity that shifts focus from individuals carrying their differences into the possibility of different ways of *becoming together* is what we see as an important value-related perspective for the practice of parental collaboration in/with ECEC.

Superdiversity does not exclude respect for and acknowledgement of individual or family identity, nor does it lock the individual within the family identity. What it allows is a possibility to *become* and create one's own self through dialogical engagement with different cultural values and meanings available in an intercultural community (Ødegaard & White, 2016; Sadownik, 2022). In particular, for children and families from minority backgrounds entering ECEC, the concept of superdiversity allows them to overcome the role of "ambassador" or representative of a particular culture/country and find new ways of be(com)ing together (Oen et al., 2022) and establishing themselves as subjects through engaging and entangling with all, including conflicting and opposite – meanings and values (Ødegaard & White, 2016) accessible in the "common symbolic space" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 52). It is important to mention that the superdiversity approach does not neglect the need for performing and living one's own culture by children and families with strong cultural identities. This is also a way of being/becoming in the new community (of ECEC), just not the only one.

Agonism

The values described above may give the impression that our value-related standpoint follows an ideal of a harmonic, disagreement-free togetherness, regardless of differences. Such an idyllic harmony is hard to relate to the dynamics of parental involvement with diverse, often conflicting interests and meanings coming to matter in the more and more diverse ECE. Thus, we highlight the value of *agonism*, which we, after Laclau and Mouffe (1985; Mouffe, 2005), recognise as absolutely fundamental and constitutive for democratic communities. This is to say that our way of seeing togetherness, including the togetherness of ECEC and the families, follows a vision of the continuous presence of alternative meanings, or of agonisms. We do not see the ECEC–parental relations as antagonistic, but rather as a form of *agonism* – continuous process of meaning-making whereby diverse meanings exist and acknowledge the legitimacy of an alternative view.

As Mouffe (2005) puts it,

> While antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies, who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognise the legitimacy of their opponents. They are "adversaries," not enemies. (p. 20)

We see ECEC collaboration with families as a common ground, or a "common symbolic space" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 52), where different "adversaries" can articulate their (conflicting) meanings as legitimate alternatives. Analogically, we see this book as a symbolic space in which different ways of theorising parental engagement in ECEC are presented and discussed. These discussions take place among participants not as enemies, but as adversaries, recognising the legitimacy of the *other*.

We also believe that it is only through acknowledging and exploring the possibility of an alternative meaning that we can develop our own meaning and standpoint (Sadownik & Starego, 2022), which is why we present to the reader an array of alternative agonistic theories that draw awareness to their own optics and the effect they have on the social practice of parental involvement.

Tender Leadership

Taking care of the rights of the child and ensuring that they are respected, engaging in the redefinition of ways to/of togetherness, and creating spaces where opposite meanings are expressed as legitimate alternatives does not happen by itself. Such processes require good governance (Kardos, 2012). What this entails is that someone must take responsibility for initiating and continuing the changemaking. ECEC has never been afraid of responsibility or action (Kamerman, 2006). Inspired by the great body of knowledge on pedagogical leadership in ECEC (Fonsen & Parrila, 2016; Heikka & Hujala, 2013; Heikka et al., 2020; Kagan & Hallmark, 2001; Sakr & O'Sullivan, 2022) and the lecture "Tender Narrator" given by Olga Tokarczuk when receiving the Nobel Prize in Litterature (Tokarczuk, 2019), we declare tender leadership as our value, which frames our thinking on parental involvement and our readings of the included theories.

Building on conceptualisations of pedagogical leadership, as distributed (Heikka & Hujala, 2013), constituted, and performed in interdependent relationships and collaborations that activate diverse human qualities as complementary team resources (Aasen, 2018), we acknowledge the "efforts of leaders to make it work" (Heikka & Hujala, 2013, p. 571). The efforts to maintain a connection among the team members ensure their motives and engagement and keep an understanding of the common goal alive. Even such leading efforts are often associated with strength, courage, and confidence, we relate it to tenderness. Tenderness is described by Tokarczuk (2019) as "a deep emotional concern about another being, its fragility, its unique nature (…) Tenderness perceives the bonds that connect us, the similarities and sameness between us. It is a way of looking that shows the world as being alive, living, interconnected, cooperating with, and codependent on itself" (p. 1). Therefore, tenderness allows for an understanding of leadership as an ethical concern about the *other*, and a deep understanding of our interconnectedness. Tender leadership is then a subtle version of distributed leadership, which accepts us in our fragility, connects us in the pursuit of new common goals, and allows us to grow in this constitutive inseparability.

Moreover, tenderness makes it possible to give a voice to others and see the agency of not only humans, but also non-human elements and earthlings. As Tokarczuk (2019) puts it, "It is thanks to tenderness that the teapot starts to talk" (p. 1). A historical look at ECEC (Kamerman, 2006) allows us to paraphrase Tokarczuk and state that it was tenderness that allowed for the child's perspective or the perspectives of Indigenous and im/migrant families to be articulated and acknowledged as significant, enriching, and worthy of taking care of.

In our times, tenderness seems to make us sensitive to other possible ontologies and worldviews, where not only the human voice comes to matter, and where agency connects all entangled human and non-human earthlings (Barad, 2007). Tenderness thus allows one to step away from Western rationalities and connect with children's ontologies, Indigenous ontologies (that have acknowledged non-human agency long before posthumanism (Rosiek et al., 2020)), and other worldviews, thereby leading in a sensitive and response-able (Haraway, 2016) way.

The response-ability (Haraway, 2016) implied by tenderness might be seen as leading power able to "cut together-apart" (Barad, 2010, p. 179). In the interdependency and interconnectedness, it "escalates some and deescalates other connections" (Sadownik, Chap. 11). It troubles exploitative existence, taken for granted privilege and discrimination. In this book, it escalates the parental involvement and theories that offer different ways of connecting with this social practice.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

With these values, we enter the diversity of theoretical toolkits in the attempt to map the complex borderland between children's families and ECE settings and search for theoretisations which are sensitive and responsive to the contemporary societal challenges.

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Chapter 1
Why a *Re*-theorisation of *More-than-*Parental Involvement in ECEC Is Needed

Alicja R. Sadownik (iD) **and Adrijana Višnjić Jevtić** (iD)

Abstract This introductory chapter begins with the critical presentation of the concept of parental involvement (PI) as one implying a "democratic deficit" that builds on educational experts' protectorate approach towards families. This aspect of PI is traced back to its history, and regardless of its colonial roots, we argue that we should not give up on this sense of PI. Based on a strong political will that can be traced in policy documents in all regions of the world, together with existing research reporting on the importance of acknowledging the democratic and culturally responsive practices of PI, we redefine PI as part of a search for theoretisations of hope, by which we mean the conceptual toolkits that acknowledge parental *participation* and provide room for more-than-parental involvement and agonism/disagreements. This introduction concludes with an overview of the remaining chapters in the book, as well as some information about the ethical details related to the empirical examples used later in the book.

Keywords Colonialism · Democracy deficit · Hope · Parental involvement · Policy

Parental Involvement: A Troubled Term with a Colonial Vibe

In recent years, parental involvement (PI) has been troubled as a self-contradictory concept that combines the forced enrolment and genuine engagement of parents/caregivers in the educational lives of their children (Devlieghere et al., 2022; Pushor,

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2012; Vandenbroeck, 2009; Van Laere et al., 2018). Involvement originates from the Latin word "involvere", which means "to roll into and by extension implies wrapping up or enveloping parents somehow into the system" (Benson, 1999, p. 48). Such a meaning of the term has been reconstructed in many critical studies showing that regardless of the intention behind enabling authentic engagement, the expression of the parent's own voice, and democratic participation, PI is in fact about following the agenda of the educational institution (Pushor, 2012). To reflect this asymmetry of power in the relationship between a (pre)school) and the students' families, Pushor (2012) uses the colonial term "protectorate" to delineate

> …a colonialist structure in which those with strengths (the colonizers) take charge to protect the those they believe to have little or no strength (the colonized). (…) Educators, as holders of expert knowledge of teaching and learning, enter a community, claim the ground which is labelled "school", and design and enact polices, procedures, programs, schedules, and routines for the children of the community. (p. 466)

Parents can choose whether to join and support these programmes and procedures (i.e., become involved), but there is no space for them to articulate the modes of involvement that they find important and meaningful. Van Laere et al. (2018) have called this a "democratic deficit" (p. 189), which refers to the idea that "the goals and modalities of PI are defined without the involvement of parents themselves" (p. 189), which makes their involvement largely about engaging in practices that have already been decided upon (Janssen & Vandenbroeck, 2018). As these practices are not necessarily meaningful for the parents (Crozier, 2001; Doucet, 2011), they may instead lead to the dis-involvement of the families (Devlieghere et al., 2022).

How alienating "involvement" in these practices can be for those of other cultures, values, and opinions becomes more visible in relation to the educational collaborations with parents of lower socio-economic status, or families from Indigenous or migrant backgrounds. Families from im/migrant backgrounds and lower social statuses are not always met in acknowledging or culturally responsive ways (Sadownik, 2022; Tobin et al., 2013; Tobin, 2020). The majority of discourses underpinning early childhood education and care (ECEC) institutions are so structured that these individuals become absent, silent, or passive in their contact with these institutions (Leareau & McNamara Horvat, 1999; Solberg, 2018; Sønsthagen, 2020).

For the Indigenous and some im/migrant families, this lack of acknowledgement also seems to occur through the Western epistemologies that interrupt their culturally anchored ontologies and dislocate their significant relationships, particularly with elders (ARACY, 2016; Hayes et al., 2009). PI in ECEC is in such cases founded on the disconnection of families from their own cultures and acculturation into the dominating one. These acculturation-related assumptions may play out in the form of deficit discourses about the Indigenous communities (ARACY, 2016; Chenhall et al., 2011; Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Muller, 2012) or programmes aimed at improving their health, competencies, and parenting skills (Mechielsen et al., 2014). The lack of recognition of these families as being in any way resourceful for the

educational system can also be observed in how the front-line staff of educational institutions are often non-Indigenous (Hayes et al., 2009; Lampert et al., 2014; Lea et al., 2011). This, together with the racism that still silently underpins many "inclusive" societies, creates a great obstacle to facilitating genuine and meaningful collaboration for all parties involved (Lowe et al., 2019).

In the case of the involvement of im/migrant parents, the acknowledgement of a family's culture or language is in some cases not even discussed, as adjusting to the dominating culture and attaining the indicators for school readiness or educational achievement is taken-for-granted goal. The study by Capps et al. (2010) conducted with fathers of Mexican and Chinese origin living in the United States, or the research of Ndijuye (2022, Ndijuye & Basil Tandika, 2022) on refugee children in Tanzania, are examples of works that do not dismantle or even discuss the cultural discourses and power relations constating the concept of educational achievement. The assumption that educational achievement and high school performance are the natural and desired goals of parental involvement shifts the focus of attempts to operationalise PI onto sets of easily measurable indicators of "the right" parental activities (Fantuzzo et al., 2000), the factors contributing to literacy development (Lee, 2002), variables that mediate academic achievement (Hill & Craft, 2003; Pomerantz et al., 2007), or how parental social class and ways of being involved influence the school performance of children from both minority or majority backgrounds (Downer & Mendez, 2005).

Our perspective on such studies is critical, as we find that they do not allow us to discuss the protectorate character of educational institutions (Pushor, 2012) and confirm the "democratic deficit" (Van Laere et al., 2018) as a foundation of PI. Imposing specific modes of involvement on very diverse families can intentionally pre-judge some families as resourceful and "good", and others as lacking in resources. These protectorate aspects of PI that emerge in these cases could be anchored in the colonial history of education, and thus also the history of PI.

The Western **History** *of Parental Involvement*

In looking at the dominant discourse on the history of PI, it is difficult to find any other registration or documentation aside from the Western version. While spreading throughout the world, this particular discourse violently discouraged and erased a lot of stories and practices related to how parents engage in the lives of their own children. In the sections below, where we take a retrospective look at PI in education, we would like to acknowledge all the stories, relationships, and practices that were interrupted and silenced in different regions of the world. As Berger (1991) states, "Parents have been their children's first educators since prehistoric times" (p. 209). However, we will never really know about many of the ways in which parents, tribes, and communities engaged in their children's lives.

The history we do know is a story of PI to a great degree, which presupposes the supremacy of educational institutions and professionals over families. This

supremacy has taken different forms and is based on the assumption that certain families have shortcomings, that compensation strategies must be developed accordingly (as is often the case for families from lower socio-economic or migrant backgrounds), and, in some circumstances, that the children's connections to their families should be severed (as in the case of many Indigenous children).

The compensatory perspective towards families and the channelling of forms of parental engagement towards the children's learning seem to have been established in the "Plowden Report". The Plowden Report was written by the Central Advisory Council for Education (1967) in England and referred to by many scholars involved in research on PI in education as a milestone and turning point in understanding the relationship between families and (pre)schools (i.e., Hornby, 2000; Crozier, 2012; Shaw, 2014). The "newness" of this report lies in its interpretation of the child's attainment of learning goals at certain ages as both a goal and a value of PI. Children's homes thus become acknowledged for their importance in their development on the one hand, but on the other, the spectrum of this contribution is narrowed to include only certain activities. Within such limits and criteria for the "right" support of children, some families appear right away to be resourceful and supportive, while others do not.

Such asymmetries were not that visible when the goal of collaboration between the homes and educational institutions was the transmission and preservation of joined values. In ancient Greece, where societies were interested in maintaining the democratic order of things, great care was taken to preserve the thoughts that diverse adults in different milieus could implant in the young mind. The minds of the children and youths were seen as the bearers of the democratic culture of the future (Berger, 1991), and families and educational institutions were viewed as equally influential and responsible for the values to which the children were exposed.

Equality was no longer the objective in medieval Europe, which was dominated by the powers of the Catholic Church. In this era, the educational system was subordinated to the normative system of religion. In such a context, the role of the home was acknowledged only as an "implementor" of Catholic beliefs and practices, consisting of actors who were expected to confirm the established religious worldview at the level of home life (Prentice & Houston, 1975).

Transformations of social systems and changes in how the child is understood – as the bearer of their own development, with childhood being considered a special period of life – pointed back to the importance of interaction between the child and everyone else involved in their upbringing. Therefore, creating a collaborative platform and communication channels through which diverse milieus could become involved in the life of the child became important. Berger (1991) identified Rousseau (1712–1778), Pestalozzi (1746–1827), and Froebel (1782–1852) as the creators of this new perspective of the child and thus the originators of the idea of collaborative relationships between parents and teachers. Their work influenced an educational approach in which the relationship between the family and the educational institutions was considered necessary for the well-being of the child. Given that Froebel is considered the founder of ECEC institutions (*kindergartens*) in Western cultures, it is possible to argue that his consideration of the necessity of collaboration with

families is organically intertwined with the institutionalisation of ECE itself (Berger, 1991; Tovey, 2013).

In the American context, John Dewey (1897), in his essay "My Pedagogic Creed", presented child-centred practice as depending on good cooperation between the educational and family environments. Such a perspective on parents led to the establishment of parent cooperative preschools in the United States (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). Parents were the founders and teachers were the managers of these institutions, which were supported by parental trust. In such facilities, programmes involving children and parents, to which parents contributed with their attendance, volunteering, and professional knowledge, were developed. In socially and economically deprived communities, such schools have made efforts to support each family's education and thus contribute to the development and well-being of children. Such approaches may be seen as focused on compensation for families' shortcomings (Ansari & Gershoff, 2016). Nevertheless, this compensatory work with families builds on the communitarian spirit of the whole community, who, through the parents becoming involved in school, reaches out to families in vulnerable life situations (MacIntyre, 2013).

Another example of how parents began to be included in early childhood education, this time in the context of England, was represented by Margaret McMillan (1860–1931). She profiled her preschool as cooperating with and assisting parents in raising their children (Lascarides & Hinitz, 2011). Her acknowledgement of the parental role was reflected in the architecture of the preschool she opened at the beginning of the twentieth century, where one room was dedicated specifically to the parents (Fitzpatrick, 2012). This is not a rule in contemporary ECE settings. McMillan also encouraged ECE institutions in London to establish mothers' clubs as a setting where young mothers could be acknowledged, empowered, and develop their parenting competencies (Fitzpatrick, 2012).

It is important to mention at this point that while these Western systems supported initiatives for PI, they were also removing children from Indigenous families in Australia, the United States, French Indochina, and Canada (Firpo & Jacobs, 2018) and putting them in either correction facilities or boarding schools, thus forcing Western culture and ontology onto them. Duke Bryant (2015) describes how the French schooling system deconstructed the mentoring authority of the parents (i.e., mothers over the daughters and fathers over the sons) and why formal education was avoided by the families. These cuts to the relationships between children and families also took the form of discouraging the use of native languages (Muaka, 2011; Nabea, 2009; Nana, 2013; Rotich, 2021), along with forced Christianisation (Glenn, 2011; Rotich, 2021). These interventions, together with the intentional spread of alcohol (Lakomäki et al., 2017), effectively destabilised the connections within families, tribes, and communities.

"Have we learned anything… from all this sad history?" asks Duke Bryant (2015). With a focus on Indigenous communities, he discusses the lack of satisfactory solutions to the complex and complicated issue of "minority education" (p. 193). We agree on the difficulty of developing a solution here and suggest continuous reflection and trials of improvement. Despite the "sad history" and

protectorate luggage of PI (Pushor, 2012), we do not want to give up on the concept and the practices it may inspire.

Why and How to Not Give Up on Parental Involvement?

The reasons for which we do not want to give up on PI are associated with its potential, which is constituted by both (a) the acknowledgement and appreciation it is given in policy documents around the world, and (b) the research documenting highly mutual, culturally sensitive, responsive, and responsible examples of family involvement. The underlying political will that led to its formation and the empirical examples demonstrating its possibility create a powerful standpoint from which we will further map the theories of PI. In doing so, we intend to embrace, confirm, and strengthen the hope of PI.

ECEC Policies Acknowledging Parental Involvement

PI is a phenomenon and practice acknowledged in ECEC policy documents if not in all countries, then at least in all regions of the world. For instance, parents, as the first and most important actors involved in and responsible for the lives and development of children, are mentioned in the *Constitutions of Ghana* (Government of Ghana, 1992) and the *Constitution of the Republic of South Africa* (1996). In a slightly different way, the Council of the European Union (2019) recognises PI in ECEC as supporting processes of poverty reduction, migrant integration, and social cohesion. Collaboration and communication between families and ECEC settings are highlighted in ECEC-related policy documents in many other countries throughout the world, including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Scotland, and Uganda. Below, more details on the values attached by these policies to the ECECs' partnerships with parents are described.

The *Early Years Learning Framework for Australia* (Australian Government Department of Education and Training, 2018) recognises families as "children's first and most influential teachers" (p. 13) and highlights ECECs' partnerships with families as one of the five principles that underpin children's learning and development. Parents and families are seen as crucial cultural knowledge recourses that shall inform the activities taking place in the ECEC setting, so that the children can participate in these services "without compromising their cultural identities" (p. 26). The reciprocal and collaborative partnerships between homes and ECECs are then a guarantee of the children's integrated becoming.

In Brazil, the Legal Framework for Early Childhood, or more formally the *LEI 13.257 Marco Legal da Primeira Infância* (2016), promotes a child-centred and family-focused approach. Within this approach, children are seen as individuals inseparable from their social and cultural contexts, which again are to be seen,

acknowledged, and valued by educational institutions. Government policies and programmes shall thus provide all families with the necessary support for responsible parenting. One such programme, the *Criança Feliz Program* (2019), meaning The Happy Child Program, developed by the National Secretariat for Early Childhood Care, reaches out to thousands of families with home visits and is considered the largest home visitation programme in the world for early childhood ages. According to *Decreto n° 8.869* (2016), the programme succeeds in exercising parenthood, strengthening bonds, and making many families capable of performing the roles of caretaker, protector, and educator of children 0–6 years old.

In this vein, the Canadian Council of Ministers of Education (2014) released the *CMEC Early Learning and Development Framework*, in which the family's central role in a child's life and development is highlighted. A parent is acknowledged as "a child's first and most important teacher" (p. 9), and ECEC-related institutions are encouraged to establish vital and reciprocal relationships with families (including extended families). According to this framework, "By working in partnership, families and educators can learn together and gain a deeper understanding of each child and ways to promote his/her learning and development" (p. 9).

Recently, the Framework for Good Management and Leadership in Early Childhood Education, developed in Chile under the title *Marco para la buena dirección y liderazgo en educación parvularia* (2023), also recognises families as the first educators of children and promotes active involvement in a variety of activities and processes. It also delineates that the responsibility for enabling and sustaining good relationships should be shared between ECECs and the families and local communities associated with them. It further highlights the necessity of an inclusive approach to values, cultures, and knowledge. This document recognises families as social capital, as they generate networks and alliances with multiple institutions and actors from the surrounding environment that enhance opportunities for comprehensive development (Ministerio de Education, 2023, p. 29). These ideas are not, however, new in the Chilean context; they appeared and were gradually developed in the *Estándares indicativos para la educación Parvularia* (2020), which pointed to the importance of communication and collaboration with families, and the *Marco para la buena enseñanza en educación parvularia* (2019), which recognises the synergies between families and communities as enriching learning opportunities and being a quality indicator in ECECs.

The *Constitution of Ghana* (Government of Ghana, 1992) states that parents have a right and obligation to act in the best interests of their children. The child's best interests may be interpreted in relation to other documents, like the *Children's Act* (Republic of South Africa, 2005) and the *Early Childhood Care and Development Policy* (Republic of Ghana, 2004), which acknowledge PI as providing general conditions for care and development, as well as more specific support to ECECs, either through volunteering, material contributions, or another form of help the ECEC setting may need. The *Ghana Inclusive Education Policy* (Ghanian Ministry of Education, 2015) clearly highlights the importance of parents' communication and cooperation with teachers as not only an obligation but also a quality characteristic of ECEC.

The *Scottish Early Years Framework* (Scottish Children and Families Directorate, 2009) highlights the parental commitment associated with a child's upbringing and emphasises the provision of a nurturing, stimulating, and conflict-free home environment as a form of PI in children's learning. This framework also underlines the necessity of parental access to integrated support in cases of weak relationships with their children or vulnerable life situations. Moreover, parental access to ECEC is also presented as the government's active help in preventing child poverty by enabling parents to access training or employment.

The *National Programme of Action for Children in South Africa* (1996) also highlights the crucial role of parental support in early childhood education. However, as families with children may be in vulnerable life situations, *Children's Act No. 38* (2005) promotes ECEC as an early intervention programme that can support families in need. As an outcome, ECECs should develop support programmes for families. The *National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy* (Republic of South Africa, 2015) expands on the rhetoric of families being the first and most important caregivers and underlines the necessity of a variety of forms for governmental (i.e., financial, educational, and advisory) support for families. It is significant that these policies highlight the need for increased and multifaceted support for families and recognise ECEC as a service capable of reaching out to families who need it the most.

Uganda's Education Act (Ministry of Education and Sports, 2008) also promotes PI through its indication that parents are the ones responsible for pre-primary education, children's support, and their relationships with the community. The *Uganda National Parenting Guidelines* (2018) provide a more precise account of these parental responsibilities as ensuring children's social-emotional development, learning, and play, which we interpret as identifying parents as a crucial resource in children's holistic development. Accordingly, they should be acknowledged as such in their contact with the (educational) institutions of the state.

Regardless of the very general rhetoric of these policies, it is still possible to discern the acknowledgement of parents' crucial role in their children's lives (Australia, Brazil Canada, Chile, Ghana, Uganda, South Africa), the child's inseparability from the family and community (Brazil and Scotland), the necessity of involving parents' cultural heritages as resources in early education (Australia), and the importance of providing all the necessary support to the families so that they could succeed in their parental role (Brazil, Chile, and Scotland). Seeing the global political will to enable/enhance partnerships between ECEC and families and communities convinces us that good practices can be achieved. The general language of these policy documents also allows for many autonomous practices to be developed at the levels of particular ECEC settings, which are to operate closely with children and their families. The examples of PI presented below show the concrete possibility of overcoming the democratic deficit (Van Laere et al., 2018) while encouraging culturally sensitive practices of collaboration between families and ECEC institutions or schools.

Parental Involvement – Some Practices of Hope

The review of the literature on the factors affecting the development of school and Indigenous community engagement conducted by Lowe et al. (2019) presents a ray of studies reporting on practices underpinned by the mutual respect and openness needed to co-create spaces for collaboration between families and (pre)schools. The studies of Chenhall et al. (2011), Chodkiewicz et al. (2008), Lowe (2017), and Lowe et al. (2019) acknowledge how certain relationships constitute Indigenous communities and allow them to exercise their social capital in alliance with schools, thus enriching the cultural and social capital of the teachers. Lowe (2017), Lea et al. (2011), Lovett et al. (2014), and Bond (2010) connect such partnerships with the further development of cultural and language programmes run by/with the local communities, which also bolsters the "educative role of the Elders" (Lowe et al., 2019).

These intergenerational aspects also appear in Nagel and Wells's (2009) powerful description of how family and culture are honoured in ECEC settings in New Zealand. In this case, the intention of *honouring* was operationalised in the form of cultural resources/artefacts reflecting the children's ethnicities being available in the room for the children's play. Such availability demonstrated how the contributions of entire families (not only parents) in the children's home languages were valued, thus enabling a sense of place (which runs more smoothly in a space filled with artefacts and languages mirroring the children's ethnicities) and goal setting for each child with the input of both parents and teachers.

The realistic possibility of creating "culturally safe, meaningful, and responsive early childhood education spaces, programmes, and practices" (Gapany et al., 2022, p. 21) is also shown in literature reviews synthetising existing experiences, like those of Krakouer (2015) and Perso (2012). Of equal importance are the most recent studies initiating and following up on efforts to acknowledge and empower families as the children's first teachers, as in the study of Gapany et al. (2022) on Aboriginal families in Australia (Gapany et al., 2022). On the basis of such studies, it is possible to claim that recognising, connecting to, and embedding cultural knowledge, languages, and worldviews is possible and indeed "encourages equal partnerships between families, educators, and local community and strengthens continuity of practices across communities and education services" (Gapany et al., 2022, p. 21; see also Grace & Trudgett, 2012; Martin, 2017).

The diversity and complexity of family relationships can also be acknowledged through the recognition of intergenerationality and involving more-than-parents in ECEC's collaboration with families. Acknowledging more-than-parents as the relational home context of the child, as well as involving the older adults from the local community, could be a game changer for ECEC settings' collaborations with children's homes. Intergenerational programmes in ECEC have the potential to transform the institutional practices of ECEC settings and challenge the Western socio-political demands of separating generations from each other (Oropilla et al., 2022). Breaking through these segregations and creating spaces for

intergenerational interactions has not only benefits for children and older adults, but is also valuable from the point of view of social sustainability (Oropilla & Ødegaard, 2021).

The acknowledgement of more-than-parents and their cultures, as well as overcoming the "democratic deficit" in ECEC's collaboration with them, can also arise through the practice of research and ECEC's collaboration with academia (Urban et al., 2012). In this vein, Moss et al.'s (2012) literature review points out the potential of ethnographic and participatory studies (Tobin et al., 2010) to introduce new, more responsive modes of communication between ECEC settings and families. Such practices are in line with the postulate for creating more "communicative spaces" (Van Laere et al., 2018) through research (Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016; Sadownik, 2022) or through staff training that encourages more inclusive and culturally responsive work with more-than-parents. The growing field of methodologies for research *with* ECEC professionals (Wallerstedt et al., 2022) implies that there is great potential for co-creating collaboration spaces intertwining families, ECEC professionals, and researchers.

The great political will and the existing documentation and reports on culturally responsive practices of PI, both of which acknowledge the importance of more-than-parental agency, have steered us away from giving up on PI. However, the concept still needs rethinking and redefinition.

More-than-Parental Involvement in a Redefined Education

Our redefinition of PI builds on the acknowledgement of more-than-parents and efforts to overcome the "democratic deficit" (Van Laere et al., 2018). To legitimise both of these aspects, it is necessary to reflect on the purpose of (more-than) PI, as anchored in the understanding of the broader purpose of education in general. Following the discussions of Biesta (2014), we suggest a value-based formulation of educational goals, as we see such goals as opening up communicative spaces (Lastikka & Lipponen, 2016; Van Laere et al., 2018) and allowing for the co-creation of various modalities of PI.

The studies referred to above, which report on the culturally sensitive, mutual, and meaningful practices for the actors involved, seem to assume and serve goals other than academic achievement. In our view, they (pre)assume values, such as mutual respect and recognition, togetherness, and superdiversity, which together create a positive climate for children's holistic development, well-being, and well-becoming.

According to Biesta (2014), global educational policies that have developed comparative measurements of children's school performance have reduced the value of good education to high educational achievement, as measured by standardised tests, which once again silenced important normative questions on what good education is. Analogically, the focus on academic attainment left PI with only a technical value (Ball, 2003; Biesta, 2014), instructing parents on what to do to

strengthen their children's language and mathematical literacies and thus rolling them into a set of activities and routines that are not meaningful to them (Benson, 1999). Following Biesta (2014), we argue for normative, value-based articulations of the purpose of education, and for the values of PI to be clearly outlined.

Building further on the work of Biesta (2014), we claim that it is easier to recognise one's own standpoint when being exposed to value-based goals. Value-defined goals, by being so transparent, invite discussion and disagreement, which itself implies the possibility and legitimacy of other values. It is much harder to articulate disagreements about learning goals, as the great majority of parents want their children to learn and develop. In fact, presenting learning goals as neutral hides the (neo-liberal) value positions underpinning these goals, and thus makes it difficult for parents to depict what it is they do not agree/identify with and why. In other words, making these values behind the learning goals transparent makes it possible to identify what/why one disagrees with, and thus opens pathways for the articulation of alternative value positions. The value-based formulation of educational purpose values alternative meanings, recognises the potential of conflicts and disagreements, and invites the possibility of "common symbolic spaces" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 25), where the goals of education can be constructively negotiated.

The usage of value-based language in defining ECEC purposes is then in line with the postulate of Vandenbroeck (2009), "let us disagree" (p. 165), which he concludes with when discussing ECE and PI in an increasingly diverse and complex world. Valuing disagreement implies PI, not as a mere invitation or meaningless enrolment, but as participation. The word participation, as explained by Benson (1999), "implies that parents actually 'have a part in'" (p. 207) and genuinely/organically belong to the space of defining the purpose of (good) education (Biesta, 2014) and establishing the premises of their own involvement.

Our Understanding of Parental Involvement

In our trial redefinition of PI, we include and build on its aspects discussed above, which consist of the following:

1. The intergenerational, more-than-parental approach to the children's home- and community-based relationships.
2. The recognition of parental *part*icipation as the families' genuine belonging and influence over their children's lives, well-being, and well-becoming.
3. The value of antagonism, conflict, and disagreements as necessary for the co-creation of meaningful collaboration between ECEC and children's homes.

When defining more-than-parental involvement in a way that would embrace and allow us to discern/discuss the three aspects outlined above, we decided to anchor our understanding of PI in interaction(s) enabled or enhanced by the fact that a particular child attends a particular ECEC setting. These groups of enabled/enhanced interactions include the following:

- *Interactions between the ECEC staff and the parents/caregivers,* which can take the individual form of a conference or talk, or the collective form of a parental meeting, parental evening, or another form of event in which both the parents and ECEC staff participate;
- *Interactions among the more-than-parents* whose children attend the same ECEC, which can be initiated by an ECEC trying to establish a community of families and bonds between the caregivers, while also taking the form of the families themselves reaching out to each other because of friendships between their children, or other issues that bond them;
- *Interactions between the parents and the children* – and not only their own children, but also other children attending ECEC. Such interactions can relate to events organised by one or more families for all or some of the children, like birthday parties, trips, or events to which all the parents and children are invited;
- *Interactions among the children, more-than-parents, and ECEC staff,* which can take place at events for all (e.g., a celebration of the end of the school year) or just one of the parents, an ECEC staff member, and a child (e.g., during the adaptation period when the parent is in the ECEC together with the child, or on a daily basis during arrival and departure situations).

We are also aware that all these interactions always take place in the context of particular cultures, values, and beliefs (that may be different for each of the interacting individuals), as well as different localities with their own policies and potentially divergent goals (Patrikakou et al., 2005). In this book, we will present theoretisations that acknowledge and offer different (however always limited) perspectives and ways of conceptualising the diverse combinations of interactions among ECEC and families; we will also acknowledge that these interactions occur within/across individual and/or institutional cultures and values.

Tracing Theorisations of Hope – Overview of the Book Chapters

When discussing the different theories used to conceptualise PI, we searched for *theories of hope*, by which we mean theories that create and embrace a reflective space for the following aspects that we highlighted in our redefinition of PI:

1. The intergenerational, more-than-parental approach to the children's home- and community-based relationships.
2. The recognition of parental *part*icipation as the families' genuine belonging and influence over their children's lives, well-being, and well-becoming.
3. The value of antagonism, conflict, and disagreements as necessary for the co-creation of meaningful collaboration between ECEC and children's homes.

Our theoretical search starts in Chap. 2 with a literature review of conceptualisations used in ECEC between the years 2000–2010 and 2021–2022. Based on the

overview of the applied toolkits and the regions of the world in which they are used, we choose theories that in our eyes carry the potential to capture good practices and enable critical views of the practices of more-than-parental involvement.

The third chapter takes a closer look at the cultural-historical wholeness approach, a Vygotsky-based theory developed by Hedegaard and Fleer. This theory, with its focus on societal, cultural, and institutional contexts, as well as the individuals operating within them, offers a holistic analytical perspective on children's development and more-than-parental involvement. The potential of this theory for enhancing critical reflection and culturally responsive practices lies in the concepts of (a) *activity settings*, in which ECEC staff and more-than-parents interact, and where cultural and institutional demands intersect with diverse individual motives, and (b) *crises* that inspire re-negotiation and re-thinking of institutional practices and individual motives.

The fourth chapter discusses Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory. It presents its origins – as a theory of involvement—as well as the ways in which it is applied when theorising the involvement of families in education. Based on articles analysed using this theory, it is shown how this theoretical model allows for the child (the centre of this model) to be acknowledged as a subject and actor of collaboration between ECEC and the family.

The fifth chapter focuses in more detail on social capital and its possible forms that occur (or do not) in the interaction between ECEC and the more-than-parents, as well as among families in/and/with communities. Building on Coleman and Putnam's theories, this chapter discusses the ways in which parental *bridging* into the parental community and *bonding* with other families could be supported.

In Chap. 6, Epstein's and Hornby's models of parental participation are examined. In discussing these models in light of the different traditions of PI, Epstein's model is shown to be one that is established on the assumption of compensation for the parents'/family's lacks, while Hornby's model seems to emphasise reciprocity and openings/closings to the various ways in which different parents participate.

The seventh chapter departs from the most desirable form of interaction between ECEC and the family, which is a partnership, and examines this relationship in light of collaboration theories. A joint understanding of the common goal and the significance of leadership in the collaboration between equal partners are highlighted and discussed in relation to an empirical example of an intercultural partnership between ECEC and im/migrant families in the United States.

Chapter 8 describes how Bordieuan "thinking tools" invite reflection on ECEC's collaboration with families and interactions among them as instances of *habituses* accumulating different levels of capital and (mis)recognising different *illusios* in their respective social *fields*. Using an example of private ECEC, this theory is shown to capture how more-than-parental forms of capital (or the lack thereof) shape their ways of becoming involved in ECEC.

The ninth chapter on the theory of practice architectures discusses more-than-parental involvement as a social practice constituted by cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements, respectively referred to as *sayings*, *doings,* and *relatings*. This theory allows us to understand the complexity of the

practice of more-than-parental involvement and the diverse arrangements that need to be addressed when intending to change it. This theoretical perspective also allows us to capture ECEC's collaboration with families in its ecology with other social practices.

Chapter 10 takes a look at discourse theory (of ECEC quality) and narrative inquiry as a theory and method and discusses the diverse discursive hegemonies shaping the practice of (more-than?) PI, as well as possibilities of challenging these hegemonies by enabling spaces where neglected narratives can be articulated. The theoretical reflection in this chapter is supported by publications addressing Indigenous families' experiences with ECEC.

The eleventh chapter troubles the assumed human–human character of collaboration between ECEC and more-than-parents and proposes a posthuman perspective on this interactive practice. After presenting posthumanism as an ethical project, as well as the conceptual toolkit of new materialism, the author shows how productive and change-inspiring this theory may be if working with ECEC staff on new forms for connectedness and intra-action with and among families. Extending the concept of more-than-parental involvement to a more-than-human entanglement empowers the staff to try out their ideas and institutions, which are impossible to justify with humanistic theoretical toolkits.

The last chapter summarises the theories described in the previous chapters and discusses them in light of the values presented in the preface of the book. The value of relational and contextual theoretical approaches is highlighted to provide conceptual toolkits for sustainable futures.

Research Ethics Connected to Empirical Examples Used in the Book

Many of the chapters use empirical examples to illustrate the theory described. Some of these examples comprise unpublished material gathered from the previous project in which we participated. These already anonymised empirical examples, stored on our computers, were gathered in line with research ethics guidelines in our respective countries (Croatia and Norway), and with the consent of the research participants. The other group of empirical examples has been generated for the purpose of this book, with the great help of our international network. Through our networks around the world, we reached out to both families and professionals with a request for anonymised stories from their experiences with ECEC–home collaborations. After receiving the stories, we ensured that all personal data were anonymised. After intertwining the stories in the text of the book, we reached out to the people who shared them with us to make sure that the context did not manipulate the content. We would like to very much thank all of our colleagues and friends who shared their stories on PI in different regions of the world.

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Chapter 2
Mapping the Theoretical Landscape of More-Than-Parental Involvement

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Abstract This chapter presents an overview of the conceptual toolkits used to theorise relationships between ECEC settings and families in academic journal articles, published in English, between the years 2000–2010 and 2021–2022. The reconstructed overview of the theories employed by researchers from different regions of the world creates a base for classification of the theories as *positivistic* (i.e., interested in measuring PI for prediction and control of academic achievement), *interpretative* (i.e., aiming at deeper contextual understandings of the perspectives of all social actors that have a part PI), or *critical* (i.e., delving into the socio-economic conditions and power relations constituting diverse understandings of the world of PI, in conjunction with the desire for change). The chapter concludes with an outline of the theories discussed in further chapters, which are of an interpretive and critical nature and embrace the understanding of more-than-parental involvement presented in Chap. 1.

Keywords Parental · Intergenerational · Participation · Decolonization · Retheoretisation

Navigating the Theoretical Landscape

Theories applied to conceptualise parental involvement (PI) have been previously subject to reflection in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC). While revisiting the phenomenon of PI, Tekin (2011) recognised three significant theoretical approaches to the concept: the cultural-historical perspective, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and Epstein's models. Green (2017), in

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contrast, reconstructed theories employed in research on PI, into groups based on their different epistemologies (positivistic, interpretative, and critical). Based on a biometric literature analysis, Addi-Raccah et al. (2021) drew networks of clusters of psychological and sociological theories used in the research on PI between 2014 and 2018, showing how theoretical approaches can facilitate different understandings of PI and work with diverse epistemologies. Despite their differences, each one of these overviews assumes that theories play a significant role in conditioning and improving our understanding of PI. While the critical and sociological approaches tend to challenge the white-middle-class premises underlying the notion of PI (Devlieghere et al., 2022; Addi-Raccah et al., 2021), the dominating positivistic account (Green, 2017), as well as school attainment-oriented psychological perspectives (Addi-Raccah et al., 2021), support an understanding of PI as an asymmetric practice of parents fitting into the criteria set out by preschools (Crozier, 2001; Doucet, 2011; Devlieghere et al., 2022). Addi-Raccah et al. (2021, p. 13) have shown how salient the privilege and domination of urban, US-centric theoretical perspectives can be by pointing out the number of times certain theorists have been cited, like Epstein (424 citations), Jeynes (307 citations), Hoover-Damsey (225 citations), Lareau (184 citations), and Hill (148 citations).

This chapter aims at balancing this domination by drawing a qualitative map of theories that conceptualise PI, and whose potential could be used to conceptualise more-than-parental involvement in ways that allow for the "democratic deficit" to be overcome (Van Laere et al., 2018). This means that after presenting a qualitative overview of the found theories, their different aims and intentions will be discussed, and those theories that merit a closer look when trying to embrace the relational and contextual perspective of more-than-parental involvement (as presented in Chap. 1) will be outlined.

Methodology

The literature search was driven by the following research question: *What theories have been employed to conceptualise PI in early childhood education?* The search was conducted in December 2022 and included the following academic databases: ERIC (2604 hits), Web of Science (4518 hits), Teacher Reference Center (176 hits), SocINDEX (621 hits), Academic Search Elite (2607 hits), and Scopus (10,606 hits). The keywords employed in the search were intended to capture possible synonyms, expansions, and equivalents of (a) parents/caregivers, (b) involvement/engagement/ collaboration, and (c) early childhood education. This resulted in the inclusion of the following keywords:

+ parent* OR famil* OR relative* OR caregiver* OR mother* OR father*
+ involve* OR participant* OR engage* OR collaborat* or cooperat*
+ kindergarten OR preschool* OR early childhood education OR ECE OR early childhood education and care OR ECEC OR preschool education OR daycare OR nurser*.

Table 2.1 Overview of the number of articles on PI published between 2000 and 2022

Year	Number of articles	Year	Number of articles
2000	8	2012	14
2001	4	2013	19
2002	3	2014	16
2003	1	2015	14
2004	4	2016	22
2005	3	2017	40
2006	8	2018	38
2007	2	2019	41
2008	11	2020	45
2009	9	2021	49
2010	9	2022	59
2011	16		

The number of hits after the duplicate control was 14,342. A further review of the identified articles was conducted with the help of Rayyan.ai software, which allows for systematisation. As the search included many articles from the field of early childhood medicine and health, as well as early intervention studies where parental opinions/involvement/engagement were significant, the selection criterion employed was journal articles belonging to the formal level of early childhood/preschool education. Such excluded a great body ($n = 13,648$) of articles from other fields than early childhood education and publications in the form of book chapters or books ($n = 259$). The final number of articles included in the review was 435. An overview of the number of articles per year is presented in Table 2.1.

The numbers show the incredible growth of research interest in this subject, in the last years. Because of the high number of articles, those that were included in the analyses were published in 2000–2010 and 2021–2022. In the analysis of the articles, the focus was on the theoretical framework used, the country/cultural context of the reported research, and the aim/intention of the article. This approach created a foundation for the selection of theories for further chapters of the book.

Parents' Involvement Conceptualised (Around the World?)

The Figs. 2.1–2.3 presented below show in which countries and regions of the world the diverse theories were applied from the year 2000 and the periods of 2001–2010 and 2021–2022. With the passage of time, the number of countries researching and publishing on PI grew incredibly, which also influenced the breadth of the theoretical approaches being employed. While some theories have been applied in the field since 2000, others are relatively new.

Year 2000

Figure 2.1 presents the theories used to conceptualise PI in the field of ECE in the year 2000. The articles come mainly from the United States, but also from Italy and Malaysia, and the depicted theories are as follows:

– (**A**) Attachment theory – inspired by writings of Bowlby (1997)
– (**B**) Ecological model Bronfenbrenner (B) – inspired by writings of Bronfenbrenner (1975, 1979)
– (**C**) Cultural-historical approach – Vygotsky (1926/1997) inspired approach including writings of diverse authors
– (**D**) Social constructivism and discourse theory – Foucault (1981) inspired critical approach to meanings and society
– (**F**) Family involvement questionnaire developed by Fantuzzo et al. (2000)
– (**Q**) Theory of ECEC quality – inspired postmodern theoretisations of quality as meaning-making (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Moss, 1988)
– (**I**) An inductively developed set of themes capturing aspects of involvement that were meaningful to parents participating in the study
– (**S**) Synthetic use of diverse categories coming from different models and approaches

Table 2.2 provides a detailed overview of the articles published on this subject in 2000.

Regardless of only eight articles being found through the query, the array of theoretical approaches being used is quite wide. In some cases, the theoretical approach was replaced by a tool that defined the diverse dimensions of PI and measured the degree to which different groups of parents (e.g., those with a lower socio-economic status) represent certain forms of PI defined in advance (Fantuzzo et al., 2000). Such an approach was balanced by trials of more adequate models capable

Fig. 2.1 Mapping theories applied in research on PI in 2000. (Source: own elaboration)

Table 2.2 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories – 2000

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Cassibba et al. (2000)	USA & Italy	Attachment theory	To validate an attachment measuring tool Q-Sort	A
Fantuzzo et al. (2000)	USA	Family involvement questionnaire	Measuring home- and school-based involvement among parents with lower SES	F
Hanson et al. (2000)	USA	Typology taken from earlier research on communication, information, engagement, decision-making	To understand family experience of transition between early childhood education services	I
Hewitt and Maloney (2000)	Malaysia	Bronfenbrenner + Vygotsky-inspired, contextual perspective on social interactions	Families' motives for children's attendance of preschool and families' perceptions of preschool education	C
Lubeck and deVries (2000)	USA	Social constructivism and discourse theory	Reconstructing discourses structuring parental (of parents representing different social classes) relations with educational institutions	D
New et al. (2000)	Italy	Postmodern perspectives on ECEC quality	Exploring local and contextual understandings of (meanings attached to) PI	Q
Kohl et al. (2000)	USA	Combining models of PI	Mapping weaknesses and strengths of different models, developing dimensions of PI sensitive to demographic risk factors	SN
Soodak and Erwin (2000)	USA	Developed in an inductive way	Finding factors of PI that are meaningful for the parents	I

of either capturing PI (Cassibba et al., 2000; Hanson et al., 2000; Kohl et al., 2000) or *understanding* the perspectives of the social actors involved (Hewitt & Maloney, 2000), as well as the social production of PI and its criteria (Lubek & deVries, 2000; New et al., 2000; Soodak & Erwin, 2000). Theories deployed to understand the social conditions and power relations underpinning the existence of temporary forms of PI, such as discourse theory and postmodern theories of quality (Dahlberg

et al., 1999), show how theory can be used to enable critical reflection over existing practice and inspire changes in established conditions. In contrast to such theories, ready-made scales did not inspire discussion of the assumptions and meanings attached to PI, but rather raised questions as to how the performance of the expected forms of PI among parents could be increased.

2001–2010

Figure 2.2 presents a map of the theories found in publications from 2001 to 2010 that conceptualised PI in the field of ECE. The articles were again mostly from the United States, but a higher number of countries and continents became visible in English-language journal articles during this time. Other countries with relevant publications included Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, Greece, Israel, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, New Zealand, Singapore, Slovenia, the United Kingdom, and Thailand. The theories depicted were as follows:

- (**A**) Attachment theory – inspired by writings of Bowlby (1997)
- (**AA**) Academic achievement theories – mostly developed by Jeynes (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2010)
- (**AC**) Theory of acculturation – growing on sociological research on adaptation to a culture started by Thomas and Znaniecki (1996)
- (**B**) Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems– inspired by writings of Bronfenbrenner (1975, 1979)
- (**BU**) Bourdieu's social theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)

Fig. 2.2 Mapping theories applied in research on PI for the period 2001–2010. (Source: Own elaboration)

- (**C**) Cultural-historical approach – Vygotsky (1926/1997) inspired approach including writings of diverse authors (e.g. Rogoff, 2003; Hedegaard., 2005; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008)
- (**CR**) Critical theories that highlight power relations – inspired by Foucault's (1981) analysis of discourse and power
- (**CL**) Collaboration theory – including sociological and psychological conceptualisations of collaboration and partnerships
- (**D**) Discourse theory – based on approaches of Foucault (1981), Laclau (1995) and Laclau & Mouffe (1985)
- (**E**) Epstein's (1986, 1990, 1992, 2001) models of parental involvement
- (**F**) Fantuzzo's family involvement questionnaire developed by Fantuzzo et al. (2000)
- (**Fs**) Family systems theories – that are Bateson (1971, 1978) inspired approaches to understand families and their involvement in PI as systemic
- (**G**) Gender theory understood here as both feministic and sociological approaches aiming to capture the role of gender in PI
- (**Lit**) Literacy theories – including approaches measuring early literacy and numeracy, as well as perspectives on literacies as cultural practices (Rogoff, 2003; Cummins, 2001, 2009)
- (**NO**) No theoretical toolkits employed
- (**Q**) Theories of quality – including modern (Harms & Clifford, 1980; Harms et al. 1998; Howes et al., 1992) and postmodern (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Moss, 1988) approaches
- (**I**) Inductively developed conceptual networks
- (**SC**) Social capital theories – inspired by sociological works of Coleman (1988, 1994) and Putnam (2000)

The tables below present the theories used in each country and the ways in which they were categorised. Specifically, Table 2.3 contains journal articles from 2001 to 2003, Table 2.4 covers articles from 2004 to 2005, Table 2.5 covers 2006–2007, Table 2.6 covers 2008, Table 2.7 covers 2009, and Table 2.8 covers articles published in 2010.

Theories of Relationships and Literacies

During 2001–2010, the English-language research on PI published in academic journals intertwined diverse theories, and authors from different regions of the world started contributing to the field. The recognised need for conceptualising full and equal partnerships between families and educational institutions inspired the use of the theory of the educational village (Breitborde & Swiniarski, 2002) and notion of social capital (Devjak & Berncik, 2009; Farell et al., 2004; File, 2001). The theory of attachment was used to underline the foundational and relational (and not only structural/formal) character of PI in ECE (Bretherhon et al., 2005; Hughes & Kwok, 2007). The relationship between fathers and preschools is seen as an

Table 2.3 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories: 2001–2003

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
File (2001)	USA	Social capital – Coleman	Presenting social capital as matching the practical needs of PI	SC
Korat (2001)	Israel	Cultural-historical approach: Vygotsky, Rogoff, Brunner-inspired conceptual toolkit	Focus on "bridges to literacy", enhancing children's literacies through home–kindergarten collaboration	C
Makin and Spedding (2001)	Australia	Support at Home for Early Language and Literacies (SHELLS)	Demonstrating how a flexible model of supporting home practices of language and literacies can function and Indigenous and non-Indigenous families	Lit
Tulananda (2001)	Thailand	Ecocultural theory, Gender theory, Anthropology	Understanding how cultural (gender) discourses create conditions for social interactions in institutional setting of preschool	G, B, D
Bhering (2002)	Brazil	Epstein + concept of "climate"	Understanding how climate for PI created by teachers encourages PI of different groups of parents	E (+)
Breitborde and Swiniarski (2002)	USA	Partnership theories of Barbour Educational Village theory	Creating models for parental involvement that would build on the community's resources and responsibility	SC
Lee (2002)	Korea	Emergent literacy theories	Indentification of activities/factors infleuncing early literacy development.	Lit
Hill and Craft (2003)	USA	No theory – PI defined in relation to parental SES and background	Finding variables that together with PI mediate academic achievement	NO

extension of the most crucial nourishing attachments for a child's socialisation and participation in play.

The idea of bridging home and kindergarten practices (connected to enhancing literacies) is also articulated by the cultural-historical theoretical perspective (Korat, 2001). Literacy theories may, however, serve different intentions and values. For instance, Makin and Spedding (2001) used a flexible model to demonstrate support at home for early language and literacies (*SHELL*) that acknowledges the diverse needs and practices of Indigenous and non-Indigenous families, whereas Lee (2002) focused on measuring the factors contributing to literacy development. In another vein, Arnold et al. (2008) confirmed the correlation between a particular definition of PI and preliteracies, whereas Taylor et al. (2008), by building on multiliteracy

Table 2.4 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories: 2004–2005

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/goal with the paper	Categorised as
Cassidy et al. (2004)	USA	Epstein & literacy theories	Understand how to value parental culture in home literacy programmes	E, Lit
Farrell et al. (2004)	Australia	Social capital, new sociologies of childhood	Researching the social capital of children, their families and community members in the context of state-wide initiative of integrated early childhood and family hubs	SC
Ishii-Kuntz et al. (2004)	Japan	PI not theorised, focus on gender theories	Understanding factors in genders roles supporting fathers' involvement in ECEC	G
Morrow and Malin (2004)	UK	Critical theories focusing on power relations and paradox of empowerment	Understanding the parents themselves as beneficiaries of PI and the paradox of empowerment	Cr
Bretherton et al. (2005)	USA	Extended attachment theory	Presenting fathers as attachment figures, playmates and socialisation agents	A
Downer and Mendez (2005)	USA	The model of Epstein + the PI scale of Fantuzzo	Measuring how social class frames ways of PI, and how it influences school achievement	AA, E, F
Kim et al. (2005)	USA	National Households educational Survey	Focus on parental standards emphasising high or low academic achievement	NO

perspectives, challenged the colonial dichotomy of a right or wrong way to facilitate literacies, thus empowering culturally diverse ways of knowing and the home practices that support it. Zhou and Salili (2008) also took a culturally sensitive approach when looking at home literacy environments that support children's interest in books.

Combining Models and Theories

The diverse combinations of theories that arose from 2001 to 2010 may be interpreted as part of a search for conceptual tools capable of embracing the deep (albeit not always just) and complex socio-cultural entanglements of PI. Embracing the complexity of culture with anthropological theories and depicting the power relations that underpin the practices of PI with the toolkits of Butler and Foucault, as done by Maranhão and Sarti (2008), brings diverse values and views into the process and goal of education, while also allowing for the possibility of empowerment. Morrow and Malin (2004) describe a trajectory of empowerment connected to one particular programme (Sure Start) and show how reducing asymmetries in power

Table 2.5 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories: 2006–2007

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/goal with the paper	Categorised as
Barbarin et al. (2006)	USA	Quality theory Academic achievement	Understanding different meanings attached to quality of home–school collaboration by Latinos and African parents	AA, Q
Caughy and O'Campo (2006)	USA	Social capital	Showing how social capital of the neighbourhood and family affects children's cognitive development and problem-solving ability	SC
Christian (2006)	USA	Family system theory	Finding psychological variables of family as a group that explain the family's behaviour in different contexts	FS
Dearing et al. (2006)	USA	Not found in the text		NO
Seginer (2006)	USA	Bronfenbrenner, social capital, Epstein	Literature review mapping development of more ecological/contextual approaches in research on PI	B, E, SC
Souto-Manning and Swick (2006)	USA	Bronfenbrenner, Vygotsky-inspired cultural-historical perspective, Freire	Redefining the paradigm of PI for practice. Description of parental strengths, inclusive approach, validating families and multiple formats of involvement. Focus on the role of teachers' (discriminating) beliefs towards different groups of parents	B, C, Cr
Xu and Gulosino (2006)	USA	Epstein, Lareau (Bourdieu)	The role of habitus and capitals in enabling partnerships	E, BU
Zellman and Perlman (2006)	USA	Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale + parent child care involvement scale	Demonstration of causality between parental involvement in care of the child and the quality of ECEC	Q
Hughes and Kwok (2007)	USA	Attachment theory	Measuring the influence of parent–student and teacher–student attachments on achievements in reading	A
Pomerantz et al. (2007)	USA	Epstein	Analysing factors of PI that contribute to a better academic achievements (commitment of resources)	AA, E

Table 2.6 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories – 2008

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the paper	Categorised as:
Arndt and McGuire-Schwartz (2008)	USA	Family Systems Theory Epstein Academic achievement Multicultural consideration in promoting parental involvement	Understand aspects that matter in parental involvement with a deep understanding of the complexity, dynamics and richness of relationships in the family	AA, E, FS
Arnold et al. (2008)	USA	Academic achievement and Literacy	Measuring correlation between PI and preliteracy development	AA, Lit
Dearing et al. (2008)	USA	Academic achievement Bronfenbrenner Epstein	Finding correlations between child–teacher relation and parental involvement in case of low-income, multicultural families	AA, B, E
Harry (2008)	USA	Epstein supported by review of existing research	Understanding barriers connected to implementation of ideal practices including deficit views on families and cross-cultural misunderstandings related to the meanings of disability, differential values, and culturally based differences in caregivers' views of their roles	E
Huang and Mason (2008)	USA	Academic achievement Epstein	Summary of knowledge on motivation components behind academic achievement. Role of PI	AA, E
Maranhão and Sarti (2008)	Brazil	Malinowski (anthropological perspective on culture) and critical theories depicting power relations of Foucault & Butler	Different values and views of the process and goal of education represented by families and schools. Possibility of enabling good strengthening confidence of both sides through the process of sharing child care	Cr
Melhuish et al. (2008)	UK	Evidence on academic achievement supported as supported by PI	Focus on creating accurate variables	AA
Palm and Fagan (2008)	USA	Ecological perspective Situated fathering (Fagan, 1999)	Understanding how gender relationships and attitudes towards the other gender's ability to care influence PI	B, G
Suizzo et al. (2008)	USA	Bronfenbrenner Family Involvement questionnaire Critical race theory	Understanding racism's influence on PI at schools	B, Cr, F

Table 2.6 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the paper	Categorised as:
Taylor et al. (2008)	Canada	Multiliteracies Postmodernism and postcolonialism as critical theories unmasking the Eurocentric discourses on national identities	Empowerment of different ways knowing, describing possibility of decolonisation in PI by acknowledging different (multi) literacies.	Cr, Lit
Zhou and Salili (2008)	China	Home literacy environment	Understanding how cultures shape children's interests in books and facilitation of different directions of literacies	Lit

relations opens up space for disagreements, conflicts, and dilemmas, which again raises important questions regarding professionals' preparation to work in such complex environments.

It was also found that Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory was combined with both critical and academic-achievement-oriented theoretical perspectives. While merging the model with critical race theory allows for the representation of racism underpinning PI at schools (Suizzo et al., 2008), operationalising the child's development level through academic achievement uses theory to justify the search for correlations between the effects of child–teacher relations and PI on academic attainment, particularly in the case of low-income families (Dearing et al., 2008). Combining Bronfenbrenner's model with the PI questionnaire developed by Fantuzzo et al. (2000) shows that PI influences children's socio-emotional competence, which is considered important for learning and school readiness (Sheridan et al., 2010). When analysing the academic and social outcomes connected to PI in a public kindergarten, Powell et al. (2010) employed both Bronfenbrenner's and Epstein's models, as well as Fantuzzo's questionnaire. Even the intentions of combining a theory with a model are often connected to capture "more", looking at the findings may give an impression of a wide theory being narrowed down to a model and its focus.

In another vein, Seginer's (2006) literature review shows how the employment of theories of social capital, Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, and Epstein's model enables more ecological and context-oriented approaches to research on PI. However, Epstein's theory turned out to be used for different aims. For instance, Pomerantz et al. (2007) employed the theoretical toolkit to analyse parental commitment to resources, which turned out to be a factor contributing to better academic achievement. Inspired by Epstein's model, Huang and Mason (2008) scrutinised the components behind academic achievement and found a supporting role for PI.

Table 2.7 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories – 2009

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Almanza et al. (2009)	USA	Epstein Social capital School readiness	Presenting a "village route" to kindergarten readiness – demonstrating a school readiness programme acknowledging children's communities	AA, E, SC
Ball (2010)	Canada	Earlier research on fatherhood and exclusion	Understanding of Indigenous men's experiences of fatherhood: personal wellness, learning fathering, socioeconomic inclusion, social support, legislative and policy support, and cultural continuity	Cr
Brown et al. (2009)	USA	Ecological perspective on school readiness, quality of relationships between parents and ECEC	A trial of extending the PI beyond the walls of the early childhood classroom to include children's and teachers' relationships with the parents/ community	AA, B, F, Q
Cheadle (2009)	USA	Social capital, Human capital, Cultural capital, Concentrated cultivation	Operationalisation of parental educational investment that results with better academic results of white middle class children	SC, Cr, BU
Devjak and Bercnik (2009)	Slovenia	Social capital Relationships Collaboration	Demonstrating that the quality of cooperation depends on tradition, objectives, social context, legal framework, and situational demands.	CL, SC
Halgunseth (2009)	USA	Bronfenbrenner Epstein Children's learning in supportive networks	Demonstrating supporting children's learning in ecologies of families in different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds	B, E, C
Nagel and Wells (2009)	New Zealand	Epstein Focus on indigenous families	Adapting the model of Epstein into indigenous context with focus on cultural artefacts reflecting family's identity, use of home languages, and creating a sense of belonging	E, Cr
Sakellariou and Rentzou (2009)	Greece	Quality theory Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (ECERS-R) Ecological approach	Examining differences among different types of setting and collaboration, different types of communications and ways of encouraging parents to be involved and if they have a role	B, Q
Turney and Kao (2009)	USA	Epstein Social capital Leareu/Bourdieu	Mapping disadvantages by identifying socio-economic, cultural-linguistic, and logistical barriers to involvement of immigrant parents	BU, E

Table 2.8 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories – 2010

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Ball (2010)	Canada	Gender theory (and its postulates of inclusion)	Shedding the light on marginalised experience and necessity of institutional acknowledgement of different kinds of parental experience	G
Biedinger (2010)	Germany	Bourdieu and diverse sociological perspectives on inequalities	A trial of equalising developmental inequalities. Showing how PI influence cognitive development, and how it self depends on the levels of parental cultural and social capital	BU
Bodovski and Durham (2010)	USA	Social capital Cultural capital	Showing the importance of parental acculturation to achieve academic success	AA, SC, BU
Capps et al. (2010)	USA	Acculturation theory Gender	Demonstration of how the higher acculturation of migrant fathers makes them more involved in the education of their children	AA, G
Hindman et al. (2010)	USA	Ecological approach to development Socio-economic and cultural privileges Academic Achievement	Showing how children's literacies increase through family participation in the development of early language and social skills	AA, B, BU, SC
Kindervater (2010)	USA	No theory – focus on school readiness	Showing home-practices making children ready for school	NO
Moghni et al. (2010)	Malaysia	Satisfaction, loyalty, and reputation as indicators of customer "Climate" created by teachers, encouraging PI	Explaining relationship between the Montessori characteristics and parental satisfaction	NO
Powell et al. (2010)	USA	Bronfenbrenner Epstein Fantuzzo: questionnaire of parental involvement	Analysis of factors in PI influencing academic and social outcomes in public kindergarten	B, E, F
Sheridan et al. (2010)	USA	Bronfenbrenner Fantuzzo	Showing PI as influencing socio-emotional competence – that is of great importance for learning and thus school readiness	B, F

Combining Epstein's theoretical model with the concept of "climate" allows us to explore how (pre)schools create an atmosphere conducive to the various dimensions of PI (Bhering, 2002). Related to literacy theories, Epstein's perspective contributes to the recognition of the value of parental culture in home literacy programmes (Cassidy et al., 2004). The complexity of family relationships and their involvement with educational institutions can also be seen in the extension of Epstein's model by the perspectives of family systems theory and multicultural considerations, as in the study of Arndt and McGuire-Schwartz (2008). These authors combine the model of Epstein with theories of social capital and Bourdieu's social theory, what makes the model "able" to map disadvantages by identifying socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and logistical barriers to PI faced by migrant parents. In Harry's (2008) research, supported by the existing body of knowledge on equality, Epstein's model is used to promote understanding of the barriers to the implementation of ideal practices. Deficit views of families, cross-cultural misunderstandings, differing values, and culturally based differences in caregivers' views of their roles also came into the picture in other studies. Epstein's model was also adapted to research on Indigenous families (Nagel & Wells, 2009) and enabled descriptions of culturally responsive practices of PI.

Such cultural sensitivity is generally not appreciated in research on PI that applies acculturation theory, which shows the importance of parental acculturation in achieving academic success in the next generation of the family (Bodovski & Durham, 2010). More specifically, Capps et al. (2010) combined acculturation theory with gender theory, which allowed for an exploration of how the acculturation of migrant fathers shifts gender performances more in line with the dominant culture, including greater involvement in children's education.

Gender Perspective

The gender dimension also appears in the article by Ishii-Kuntz et al. (2004), who try to understand how the different factors related to gender roles can support PI. In a similar way, Tulanada (2001) explored how cultural gender discourses create conditions for social interactions, including those between professionals and parents in the ECEC context. The presumption of different expectations and attitudes towards the other gender's ability to care also comes out in the research of Palm and Fagan (2008). Awareness of gender discrimination underpins the work of Ball (2010), who uses the emancipatory potential of gender theories to shed light on marginalised parental experiences and claims of institutional acknowledgement.

Quality Theories

An interesting approach to PI is presented in articles that build on quality theories. While modernistic approaches to quality see PI as a significant element in the process of ensuring ECEC quality (Sakellriou & Rentzou, 2009; Zellman & Perlman, 2006),

according to postmodern approaches, quality is understood as a process of meaning-making, and such researchers are more interested in the meanings attached to good home–school collaboration involving different groups of parents (Barbarin et al., 2006). Awareness of the quality of cooperation as anchored in traditions, social contexts, legal frameworks, and situational demands is also discussed by Devjak and Berncik (2009).

2021–2022

Figure 2.3 presents a map of the theories found in articles published from 2021 to 2022. The extent to which the different theories were applied to diverse cultures shows significant growth, as the published articles come from 32 countries from all regions of the world, including Australia, Austria, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Israel, Italy, Korea, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Serbia, Singapore, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Tanzania, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The greater number of published papers and the wider scope of countries contributing to international journal publications led to a greater number of theories being involved. The theories depicted in the articles published in 2021–2022 are as follows:

– (**A**) Attachment theory – inspired by writings of Bowlby (1997)
– (**AA**) Academic achievement theories – mostly developed by Jeynes (1999, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2010)
– (**B**) Bronfenbrenner's theory of ecological systems – inspired by writings of Bronfenbrenner (1975, 1979)
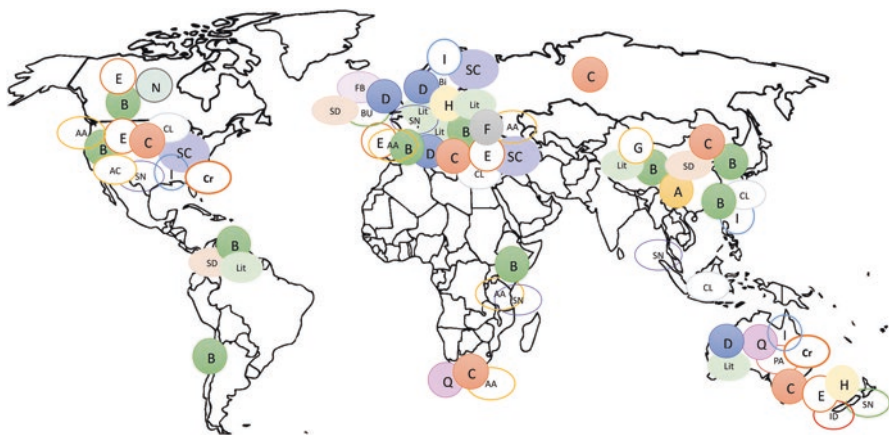

Fig. 2.3 Mapping theories applied in research on PI for the period 2021–2022. (Source: Own elaboration)

- (Bi) Biesta's (2004) theory on the community
- (**BU**) Bourdieu's social theory (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992)
- (**C**) Cultural-historical approach – Vygotsky (1926/1997) inspired approach including writings of diverse authors (e.g. Rogoff, 2003; Hedegaard., 2005; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008)
- (**CR**) Critical theories that highlight power relations, inspired by Foucault's (1981) analysis of discourse and power and theories of social justice (Fraser & Honneth, 2003)
- (**D**) Discourse theory – based on approaches of Foucault (1981), Laclau (1995) and Laclau & Mouffe (1985)
- (**E**) Epstein's (1986, 1990, 1992, 2001) models of parental involvement
- (**F**) Fantuzzo's family involvement questionnaire developed by Fantuzzo et al. (2000)
- (**FB**) Froebel's (1912) inspirations
- (**H**) Hornby's (2000, 2011) model of PI
- (**I**) Inductively developed conceptual networks
- (**Q**) Theories of quality – including modern (Harms & Clifford, 1980; Harms et al. 1998; Howes et al., 1992) and postmodern (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Moss, 1988) approaches
- Narrative theories (N).
- (**PA**) Theory of practice architectures developed by Kemmis et al. (2014)
- (**SC**) Social capital theories – inspired by sociological works of Coleman (1988, 1994) and Putnam (2000)
- (**SD**) Self-developed concepts or scales of PI or new combinations of existing psychological scales
- (**SN**) Synthetic conceptual toolkits based on diverse literature.

As presented in Fig. 2.3, these theories were employed by scholars from all over the world, including those in Anglo-Saxon countries, as well as the Global South.

In the years 2021–2022, more articles on PI were published than between 2000 and 2010, which shows that interest in the subject had grown all over the world. Figure 2.3 shows the growing geographical spread, with the subject engaging more and more regions of the world and motivating further scientific debate on the collaboration between families and ECEC settings. The growing number of papers – all presented in Tables 2.9 and 2.10 – has also resulted in more theoretical approaches being used, however, with some also being "re-used" and their validity being further confirmed.

Those theoretical perspectives transcending the boundaries between different regions of the world are those that either take into consideration the local socio-cultural context (like the ecological model of Bronfenbrenner and the Vygotsky-inspired cultural-historical perspective) or those that focus on phenomena that are possible to measure and compare regardless of the context, such as academic achievement.

Table 2.9 Overview of the number of articles on PI published in 2021

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Anderstaf et al. (2021)	Sweden	Biesta: theory of those who have nothing in common	Exploration of dilemmas ECEC professionals experience when collaboration with parents in multicultural settings	B
Ansari and Markowitz (2021)	USA	Social capital	Demonstration of home-based and school-based involvement of parents as two possible ways	SC
Bonifacci et al. (2021)	Italy	Literacy theories	Showing how linguistic and numeracy skills of preschoolers as anchored in parental/home numeracy and literacy	Lit
Breitkreuz et al. (2021)	Canada	Human ecology theory	Insight into mothers' hidden work in an underfinanced ECEC	B
Cooke and Francisco (2021)	Australia	Theory of practice architectures	Understanding collaboration with parents as a risk-taking practice and ECEC quality development	PA
De Los Santos Rodríguez et al. (2021)	USA	Own conceptualisation of empowerment	Description of an innovative approach to support and empower Latinx families with preschool-age children and leverages their high use of mobile phones by sharing videos modelling conversations about mathematical concepts	SD
Gedal Douglass et al. (2021)	USA	Developed on the basis of linking EARLY HEAD programme with kindergarten readiness	Shedding the light on kindergarten readiness in a program equalising educational chances	SD
Ekinci-Vural and Dogan-Altun (2021)	Turkey	Epstein	Presenting teachers' perspective and aims connected to PI	E
Farrugia and Busuttil (2021)	Malta	Cultural-historical: Rogoff & Vygotsky; Bronfenbrenner	Showing connection–disconnection between home–school under COVID-19 pandemics	(B) C

Table 2.9 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Fenech and Skattebol (2021)	Australia	Social justice theory (Fraser)	Developing just strategies for inclusion: equip for inclusion, entice participation, enable access, engage families – as a way to distinct room enrolment and attendance	Cr
Formosinho (2021)	Portugal	Own, Freire-inspired pedagogies of participation	Showing how schoolification became a parental duty during pandemics and increased inequalities between children	Cr
Gamoran et al. (2021)	USA	Social capital	Measuring if social capital really influences students' achievements in reading and mathematics (no causality was found)	SD
Harris (2021)	USA	Inductive	Showing how confirmation of parental (constructivist) ontologies contributes to parental satisfaction and authentic relationships with ECEC	I
Hu et al. (2021)	Australia	Language development theories	Understanding shared reading experiences at home and preschools; parental and teachers' attitudes and experiences of learning opportunities	Lit
İnce Samur (2021)	Turkey	Literacy	Describing collaborations able to create reading cultures at homes/ECEC settings	Lit
Jacobs et al. (2021)	New Zealand	Literacy	Valuing the linguistically and culturally diverse literacies children carry from their whānau, homes, and communities in bicultural and superdiverse Aotearoa New Zealand	Lit
Junge et al., 2021	Germany	Early science learning and literacies (not related to academic achievement)	Showing contribution of home environments to children's early science knowledge	Lit

Table 2.9 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Kigobe et al. (2021)	Tanzania	Hoover-Dempsy	Understanding influence of teacher–parent communication and parental involvement in homework and reading at home on decoding skills, reading fluence and reading comprehension	AA
Kocourková et al. (2021)	Czech Republic	Media education as a theory	Showing form of nursery-home communication on the topic of media education. Highlighting necessity to support teachers' competence	SN
Lau and Li (2021)	Hong Kong	Bronfenbrenner and social networks theory	Parental contribution to the children school readiness in the times of pandemics. The crucial role of wider/bigger networks of parents in enhancing academic skills, self-management and mental preparation	B/SN
León-Nabal et al. (2021)	Spain	Bronfenbrenner Epstein	Understanding digitally mediated home preschool relationship in time of pandemics	B/E
Lohndorf et al. (2021)	Chile	Conceptualisations of parental skills and school readiness	Showing how socio-economic status, parental beliefs and parenting practices can predict preschoolers' school readiness	AA
Marković and Petrović (2021)	Serbia	Systemic approach Bronfenbrenner Fantuzzo	Highlighting importance of parental satisfaction and parental need of support	B/F/Fs
Menand et al. (2021)	Canada	Reporting child's abuse	Describing factors that influence teachers' support for children/families in cases of violence	SN
Morales-Alexander (2021)	USA	Rogoff, Pushor, anchoring PI as a cultural practice without objectively "positive" or "negative" forms for practice	Showing how socio-cultural approaches enable perception of PI as cultural practice and enable researchers' sensitivity	C

Table 2.9 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Murphy et al. (2021)	Australia	Quality related approaches	Understanding (a) parents' experience of collaborative practice, (b) educators' confidence in working with families and (c) educators' perceptions of training needs	Q
Nguyen et al. (2021)	USA	Bronfenbrenner-inspired ow supplemental and collaborative model to enhance early language and reading skills	Effectivity of bidirectional communication trust and empathy in enhancing early language and reading skills	Lit
Obradović et al. (2021)	Not found	Psychological scales of executive functions and self-regulations	Demonstrating that much of parental directive engagement is counterproductive in terms of self-regulation	SN
Oropilla and Ødegaard (2021)	Norway	Cultural-historical	Showing intergenerational practices in ECEC, as practices of sustainability, in times of growing diaspora of generations	C
Peled et al. (2021)	Israel	Parental involvement conceptualised through the use of WhatsApp	Proposing a scale that needed validation and that measured satisfaction, safety network, media usage and decision making	SD
Purola and Kuusisto (2021)	Finland	Social capital	Using social capital index on PI in Finland with long tradition of parental participation in ECEC	SC
Rautamies et al. (2021)	Finland	Trust in educational partnerships	The analysis revealed two critical elements of trust in educational partnership: (1) Child well-being in the daycare centre, and (2) a supportive parent–educator relationship and collaboration. Critical factors in the first element of trust were educators' respectful and good-quality relationships with the child and fair and meaningful pedagogical practices	SN

Table 2.9 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Rech et al. (2021)	USA	Epstein Diffusion and Innovation theory	Showing knowledge, persuasion, decision-making, implementation and confirmation in family engagements in ECEC	E
Sadownik et al. (2021)	Australia, Croatia, Denmark, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden UK	Discourse theory	Parental involvement policies as shaping sustainability practised through ECEC	D
Schock and Jeon (2021)	USA	Hoover-Damsey's bilateral relationships between home–school	This study explores whether four program-level support (benefits, professional development supports, teacher social supports, program-level family involvement activities) are associated with teacher-perceived support from families	SN
Schriever (2021)	Australia	Inductive (related to digital differences between home and educational institutions)	Understanding how early childhood teachers perceive and manage parental concerns about their child's digital technology use in kindergarten	I
Silinkskas et al. (2021)	Lithuania	Reading/spelling theories	Parental reading and spelling as influencing children's development of word reading and spelling skills	AA
Soltero-González and Gillanders (2021).	USA	Socio-cultural, cultural-historical	Understanding the experiences of Latinx parents during COVID-19 pandemics. Findings revealed emergence of more authentic parent–teacher partnerships and parents' extensive engagement in teacher-suggested activities	C

Table 2.9 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Sun and Ng (2021)	Singapore	Bilingualism	Demonstration of faster receptive vocabulary growth with English input at homes	Lit
Tang et al. (2021)	Hong Kong	Parental stress	Measuring parental stress connected to children's academic setback (parents with performance goals – higher level of stress)	SD
Uysal Bayrak et al. (2021)	Turkey	Bronfenbrenner Vygotsky Socio-cultural learning Parental inventory scale	Exploring parents' role as teachers in daily activities stimulating creativity, teaching learning, and play	C/ SN
Višnjić-Jevtić (2021)	Croatia	Cultural-historical wholeness approach Playing-learning child	Showing social aspects of learning and parental understanding of learning (parents valuing socio-emotional aspects of scientific knowledge)	C
Volk (2021)	USA	Cultural approaches to literacy – spatial turn in literacy theories	Showing how children and families from low-income Latino backgrounds expressed their agency by building on the affordances of their homes, neighbourhoods, and city. Implications for practice include foregrounding children's expertise and creating collaborations between schools and community settings	Lit/Cr
Vuorinen (2021)	Sweden	Inductive development of categories (grounded theory)	How do parents perceive the process of building good relationships with preschool practitioners and its relation for family's choice of a kindergarten	I
Warren and Locklear (2021)	USA	Earlier research on parenting styles and academic achievement	Finding factors of academic success of American Indian students	AA
Wright et al. (2021)	USA	Head start program in relation to families with low SES	Showing stigmatising effect of homelessness and positive influence of meals/ food programmes at school	I

Table 2.9 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Wu (2021)	China	Bronfenbrenner Cultural-historical approaches to play	Understanding commonalities in teachers' and parents' perceptions of learning and play	B/C
Yngvesson and Garvis (2021)	Sweden	Bronfenbrenner	Including the perspective of the child in collaboration between the ECEC and parents	B
Zhang et al. (2021)	China	Bronfenbrenner, Process-Person-Context-Time (PPCT) model	Understanding parental beliefs about play's role in children's early development, play practices differentiated by SES of families	SD

Cultural-Historical Perspective

Looking at a few studies in particular, the cultural-historical framework enabled Morales-Alexander (2021) to understand PI as a cultural practice, which again facilitates the perception of many practices of Latino parents in the United States as supportive and valuable for children's all-round development and ultimate school readiness. This theoretical framework thus promotes a deeper understanding of parental practices, and not just their assessment from another culturally established standpoint. Analogical re-perception of diverse home activities as actually supporting children's literacies and parents being factual teachers also appears in the text of Uysal Bayrak et al. (2021). Another important feature of this theoretical toolkit lies in how it enables the exploration of parental perspectives on children's learning (Višnjić-Jevtić, 2021), in particular book-provision programmes (Gillanders & Barak, 2022), or teachers' and parents' co-constructed understandings of learning in play (Wu, 2021). An interesting application of the cultural-historical perspective by Liu and Hoa Chung (2022) traces the effects of fathers' and mothers' expectations and the context of the home environment on children's literacies.

Other articles building on the cultural-historical (context-sensitive) theoretical framework were intended to capture changes in PI during the COVID-19 pandemic. While Soltero-González and Gillanders (2021) identify a more authentic, even digitally mediated form of parent–teacher communication and a greater variety of practices that families create to support children's learning and well-being, Farrugia and Busuttil (2021) focus on digital connections and disconnections between home and school during children's remote learning. Guan et al. (2022) focus on how COVID-19 enabled grandparents' involvement in math learning, and thus extended the parental involvement into intergenerational one. In another study, León-Nabal et al. (2021)

Table 2.10 Parental involvement: Articles, intentions, and theories – 2022

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Armstrong et al. (2022)	Australia	Cultural-historical analysis of policy documents	Reconstructing Indigenous perspectives (Yolŋu) on children's learning	C
Bayat and Madyibi (2022)	South Africa	Bronfenbrenner Context of COVID-19 pandemics	Showing supportive/ hindering aspect of PI on children's learning in low-income area in Philippi	B/ AA
Bipath et al. (2022)	South Africa	Postmodern approaches to ECEC quality Parental understandings of play	Understanding parental perspectives on play and learning and practices that facilitate it	Q
Birbili (2022)	Greece	Postmodern approaches to ECEC quality and Bakhtin's dialogical perspective	Understanding pedagogical documentation as dialogical meaning-making	Q
Biswas et al. (2023)	Bangladesh	Bronfenbrenner Cultural-historical activity theory Home Stimulation Piaget Partnership	Capturing aspects of PI connected to carer involvements with children in relation to a children book ownership programme	SN
Bonifacci et al. (2022)	Italy	Psychological perspectives on cognitive skills, early literacy and numeracy	Testing a multifactorial model of home activities facilitating cognitive skills, early literacy and numeracy	Lit/AA
Bridges et al. (2022)	USA	Psychological scale on purposeful parenting	Correlation between purpose parenting and supporting socio-emotional development, important for school readiness	SD/AA
Çetin and Demircan (2022)	Turkey	Bronfenbrenner Epstein Fantuzzo – questionnaire Coparenting Relationship Scale Role Activity Beliefs Scale Self-Efficacy Beliefs Scale	Capturing role of motivational beliefs in performance of coparenting and PI	SN

Table 2.10 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Chen et al. (2022)	China	English language literacy Psychological perspectives on stress + scales	Demonstrating how stress connected to lower socio-economic status is influencing home possibilities to facilitate literacies	Lit/Cr
Cheung et al. (2022)	Hong Kong	Bronfenbrenner Autonomy concept	Parental support of children's autonomy as facilitating academic skills, encouraging learning and school liking	B
Dereli and Türk-Kurtça (2022)	Turkey	Bronfenbrenner Epstein Hornby	Capturing dimensions of PI in ECEC during COVID-19 pandemics	B/E/H
Devlieghere and Vandenbroeck	Belgium	Critical literature review	Literature review deconstructing the concept of PI in ECEC	Cr
Durmuşoğlu (2022)	Turkey	Epstein	Understanding teachers' perspectives on PI	E
Ejuu and Opiyo (2022)	Kenya Uganda (Ubuntu)	The bio-ecological model of development, by Bronfenbrenner & Morris; Inclusive education perspectives on children with special needs	Understanding the phenomenon of *flourishing* – as based on home-based education that recognises the family, cultures as valuable, as the first teachers	B
Eliyahu-Levi (2022)	Israel	Bourdieu Narrative research	Giving voice to asylum-seeking parents whose desire to belong to school community disturbed by reality of poverty and work around the clock	BU N
Erdemir (2022)	Turkey	Bronfenbrenner Resilience	Following up on an intervention of home-based ECEC for refugee and local children via mothers	B
Gapany et al. (2022)	Australia	Cultural/Critical perspectives Empowering	Acknowledgement and empowerment of Aboriginal families of Yolsu kindship. Acknowledging kindship, clan concepts, cultural knowledge and families as first teachers	C/Cr

Table 2.10 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Gillanders and Barak (2022)	USA	Rogoff- and Vygotsky-inspired cultural historical models of literacy	Giving voice to Mexican and American parents participating in a literacy programme	C/Lit
Greco et al. (2022)	Argentina	Bronfenbrenner Concepts of exclusion and withdrawal	Capturing parental beliefs about social withdrawal in preschool age	B
Grobler (2022)	South Africa	Vygotsky-inspired perspective on the importance of the context Disaster management	Insight in teachers' experiences of parental involvement during COVID-19 pandemic	C
Gross et al. (2022)	USA	Fantuzzo Social capital Epstein School readiness	Developing equitable measures for knowledge/expectations, trust/communication, home-based engagement	SN
Guan et al. (2022)	China	Intergenerationality in context	Highlighting grandparents' involvement in math learning during COVID	C
He and Thompson (2022)	USA	Epstein	Correlation between family involvement and English learner's outcomes	E
Jayaraj et al. (2022)	Malaysia	Parental play belief scale Engagement in school readiness	Parental attitudes towards play in preschool as parental engagement in school readiness	SD
Kambouri et al. (2022)	UK	Froebel-inspired	Developing parental involvement practices by using Froebel inspirations	F
Levickis et al. (2022)	Australia	Inductive analysis	Understanding parental experience of family engagement with ECEC during COVID-19 pandemics (disruptions, barriers, support, increased parental appreciation of ECEC)	I
Liang et al. (2022)	USA	Home literacy Homework	Parents views on children's learning experiences and homework	Lit

Table 2.10 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Liu and Hoa Chung (2022)	China	Vygotsky-inspired perspective on home literacy; gender (fatherhood, motherhood)	Measuring effects of fathers' and mothers' expectations and home literacy involvement on children's cognitive–linguistic skills, vocabulary, and word reading	C/Lit
Liu et al. (2022)	China	Bronfenbrenner	Understanding after-school program staff relationships with mothers – showing that good relationships among adults present in children's lives facilitate their adjustment	B
Luo and Gao (2022)	China	Socio-economic perspective	Examination of how socio-economic status was linked to preschoolers' self-regulated learning through parental educational expectation and home-based involvement in one and multi-child's families	SN/Cr
Luo et al. (2022)	China	Ecological exchange network Cultural-historical perspectives	Insight into virtual home visits experience during the COVID-19 pandemic as an experience enhancing preschool-home collaboration	B/C
McKee et al. (2022)	Canada	Family vibrancy (Epstein)	Using family vibrancy as showing the richness of parental cultural, lingual and other resources	FV
McWayne et al. (2022)	USA	Critical theories challenging power positions in PI	Challenging one way in school partnerships and arguing for home-to-school model	Cr
Mercan et al. (2022)	Turkey	Bronfenbrenner STEM and academic achievement	Parental awareness of the importance of STEM as influencing transition to school	B/AA/SN

(continued)

Table 2.10 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Ndijuye and Tandika (2022)	Tanzania	School readiness Academic achievement Socio-economic background creating the basic toolkit	Measuring the role of fathers' involvement in school performance of refugee and local children	AA/SN
Nóblega et al. (2022)	Peru	Scale of PI focused on caregiving and socialisation activities	Validating an instrument in another socio-cultural context.	SD
Özgül and Bayındır (2022)	Turkey	School readiness Academic achievement	Understanding relation between parental involvement and school readiness: the mediating role of preschoolers' self-regulation skills	AA
Pan et al. (2022)	China	Scientific Fitness Literacy	Correlation between families' socio-economic background and children's scientific fitness	SD
Parrish et al. (2022)	UK	Not identified	Parents' and grandparents' perceptions of children's physical activity at home, as knowledge important in the creation of physical activity policies	SD
Puccioni et al. (2022)	USA	Parental beliefs on school readiness	African American parents' beliefs on school readiness	AA
Rabin et al. (2022)	USA	School readiness and psychological perspectives on educational achievement inspired by Duncan et al.	Making school readiness more accessible for Latinx families	AA
Raynal et al. (2022)	USA	Categories based on previous research	Exploring multigenerational engagement in science as supporting children's learning	I
Rey-Guerra et al., 2022	Peru	Bronfenbrenner	Understanding diverse home-based activities as facilitating children's emergent literacies, numeracy, emotional functioning, motor development and executive functions	B/Lit

Table 2.10 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Rickert and Skinner (2022)	USA	Psychological theories on self-system (sense of relatedness, competence and autonomy)	Capturing "warm involvement" – role of enthusiasm and parental perception of teachers' warm involvement	SD
Sadeghi and Sadeghi (2022)	New Zealand	Hornby, Epstein, Hulaja, Ducan, Hedges & Gibbs	Understanding and highlighting the roles of father	SN/G
Sanders et al. (2022)	Canada	Narrative theory	Capturing and understanding experiences of small children's parents from the time of COVID-19 pandemic	N
Sawyer et al. (2022)	USA	Bronfenbrenner Acculturation theory	Unfolding diverse reasoning for school readiness among im/migrant parents from diverse cultures	B/AC
Sengonul (2022)	Turkey	Bronfenbrenner Bourdieu Coleman	Unfolding which social groups benefit (in the form of academic achievement) out of parental involvement	B/BU/SC
Schörghofer-Queiroz (2022)	Austria	Cultural-lingual context Identity creation Goodall & Montgomery Hornby Superdiversity	Exploring creation of parental identity when being engaged and learning a new language	SN
Shim and Shin (2022)	Korea	Bronfenbrenner	Understanding the networks of parenting among preschool mothers	B
Shinina and Mitina (2022)	Russia	Cultural-historical	Developing a scale building on assumptions of cultural-historical approach, that captures child–parent interactions	SD
Sianturi et al. (2022)	Australia	Review on Indigenous parents' educational engagement	Tracing the history of marginalised perspective of Indigenous parents	Cr/C
Simons et al. (2022)	USA	No theoretical anchoring	Developing policies to provide the parents with the right information on what the school readiness is	NO

Table 2.10 (continued)

Article	Country	Theory	Intention/aim with the article	Categorised as
Sisson et al. (2022)	Australia	Conceptualisations based on the Reggio pedagogy with the use of cultural artefacts that empower new ways	Arguing for the importance of more mutual relationships between parents and educational institutions (two-way street metaphor)	I
Siu and Keung (2022)	Hong Kong	Parental views on play in ECEC settings	Understanding parental perspective on play and enhancing learning through play	I
Syuraini et al. (2022)	Indonesia	Communication/ collaboration/ participation based on earlier research	Capturing understandings and factors of parent–teachers partnership that affect learning outcomes in particular cultural context	SD
Wei et al. (2022)	China	Numeracy and mathematical skills	Showing relevant ways of parental involvement to support development of numeracy and mathematical skills	Lit
Yue et al. (2022)	China	Chinese Parental Involvement and Support Scale for Preschool Children (CPISSPC) to measure parental involvement and support for preschool children.	Developing a scale for optimal measure of parental involvement in the life of a child and spot differences based on socio-economic status and education of parents	SD
Zhang et al. (2022)	China	Bronfenbrenner Attachment Family system	Understanding the family process (also intergenerational) as influencing social adaptation to child-care services	B/A/FS

employed an ecological theoretical perspective to describe the virtual home visits during the COVID-19 outbreak in China that turned out to be supportive arenas for information exchange and socio-emotional support. Cultural-historical theory is also used as a basis for developing a locally sensitive and locally applicable scale for evaluating parent–child interaction (Shinina & Mitina, 2022). A slightly different, albeit close, theoretical perspective (of cultural models) is used by Sisson et al. (2022) to describe the processes of balancing power relations and supporting authentic partnerships between professionals and parents through the activities of co-designing and co-creating diverse artefacts.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems

Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory is another context-sensitive approach that serves as a foundation for articles with a similar focus to the one conceptualised by the cultural-historical perspective. Some of the authors merge these perspectives when describing their own theoretical framework by focusing on the commonalities connected to the importance of the context (Farrugia & Busuttil, 2021; Uysal Bayrak et al., 2021; Wu, 2021). Others, by employing the theory of ecological systems, conduct projects analogous to those administered through cultural-historical perspectives. For instance, by employing the ecological systems theory, Zhang et al. (2021) conducted research on parental play beliefs in a way that was analogical to the project of Višnjić-Jevtić (2021), which explored parental understandings of learning with the use of the cultural-historical theoretical toolkit, while Bayat and Madayibi (2022) closely examined home-based involvement in Philippi during pandemics.

As the child is kept at the centre as a final beneficiary of parental collaboration with ECEC settings, Yngvesson and Garvis (2021) include the perspective and agency of the child in their research. The child's voice is presented through the story constellations of teachers, parents, and children. Through this approach, Yngvesson and Garvis (2021) actively connect the child to the mesosystem of ECEC–family collaboration.

Combined with attachment theory, ecological systems theory enables us to track how intergenerational family-based attachments (with parents and grandparents) factor into and influence social adaption in an ECEC setting (Zhang et al., 2022). The effects of the mesosystem's collaborations on the child's development can also be traced with the use of Bronfenbrenner's model. For instance, Liu et al. (2022) explore how the relationships between teachers and afterschool programme staff influence the child's adjustment to ECEC, while Cheung et al. (2022) trace how parental support of autonomy and home-based learning activities encourages preacademic skill development and school liking. However, ecological systems theory can also inspire (analogical to the cultural-historical approach) an understanding of PI as a cultural practice. This is demonstrated in the study by Ejuu and Opiyo (2022), who worked with Ubuntu families and describe a kind of "flourishing" built on recognition and acknowledgement of (intergenerational) family cultures as valuable first teachers.

A quite interesting attempt to embrace the parental perspective is represented by authors who did not apply any particular theoretical toolkit, but rather reported on existing knowledge and developed their own categorial network based on empirical data (i.e., voices of families). Such inductive ways of developing key concepts were used in 2021–2022 to embrace the following:

(A) Parental perceptions of building relationships with ECECs (Vuorinen, 2021).
(B) Parental ontologies as a basis for assessing their satisfaction with ECEC services (Harris, 2021).

(C) Im/migrant parents' beliefs in school readiness (Puccioni et al., 2022; Simons et al., 2022).
(D) Parental understandings of play (Siu & Keung, 2022).
(E) ECEC teachers' perceptions and management of parental concerns and their connection to the child's use of digital technology in the ECEC setting (Schriever, 2021).

Unmasking Power Relations

While cultural-historical approaches, the Bronfenbrenner model, or inductive research can be used to challenge the established understandings of PI by exploring, understanding, and valuing diverse culturally based practices, critical approaches trace the power relations and dominating discourses constructing and underpinning the established understandings of PI. For instance, McWyane et al. (2022) unmask the misconceptions and hierarchical power structures that prelude educators from perceiving powerful knowledge about home-based practices and routines (which would enable educational institutions to become more familiar for children of diverse cultural and socio-economic backgrounds). In this vein, Sadownik et al. (2021) use discourse theory to unmask the implied hegemonies of meaning connected to social sustainability in the parts of the ECEC policy documents that regard parental collaboration. By bringing diverse policy discourses to the table, and thus alternative meanings attached to parental collaboration, the authors were able to represent the silent assumptions underlying the relation between ECECs and families. Such approaches also allow for the representation of discursive changes, as in the context of pandemic, where in the context of Portugal, responsibility for the schoolification of children was placed on parents, which again made the children's education depend on parental resources (Formosinho, 2021). Unmasking such practices and the power relations behind them raises questions of social justice. Fenech and Skattebol (2021) thus employed Nancy Fraser's theory of social justice to explore diverse approaches to including/involving parents.

Awareness of the role of the discursive arrangement that shapes the social practice (of PI) is also present in the theory of practice architectures. Cooke and Francisco (2021) examined the architecture of risk-taking practices in relation to ECEC's collaboration with families, which led to the detection of the cultural-discursive, economic-material, and socio-political arrangements constituting these practices. Additionally, this theory allows us to see the ECEC–family collaboration in a kind of ecology with other practices, which can be considered another way to embrace the wider context of PI.

Collaboration and Social Capital

Theories of social capital are intertwined with research on PI in different ways. These range from helping to assess whether social capital influences students' academic achievement in reading and mathematics (Gamoran et al., 2021; Sengonul, 2022) to measuring the level of social capital in a socio-cultural context (i.e., Finland) with a long tradition of positive parental participation (Purola & Kuusisto, 2021). The relevance of social capital in different kinds of PI (i.e., home- or school-based) is also described, particularly with respect to low-income families (Ansari & Markowitz, 2021). Feelings of trust and safety comprise one of the key dimensions of social capital (Purola & Kuusisto, 2021), which are also explored in another Finnish study showing that trust in educational partnership is constituted by two crucial elements: (1) the child's well-being in the ECEC setting, and (2) a supportive parent–educator relationship and collaboration (Rautamies et al., 2021). A deeper insight into such collaborations and partnerships is done in the study of Syuraini et al. (2022), who develop indicators of successful collaboration based on a wide range of existing research on communication, collaboration, and participation. This creates their starting point for gathering data in the context of Indonesia. Partnerships between families and ECEC are also supported by the models of Hornby (2000, 2011) and Goodall-Montgomery (2014).

Epstein

Epstein's (2010, 2011) theoretical model, as previously mentioned, may be employed with different intentions, whether as a matrix showing diverse aspects of PI (Ekinci-Vular & Dogan-Altun, 2021) or as a means of stimulating teachers' innovations in PI practices (Rech et al., 2021). Combined with Hornby's model, Epstein's model is used in one study to explore and promote fathers' participation in ECEC (Sadeghi & Sadeghi, 2022). Epstein's model is also employed by researchers who build on critiques and suggestions directed towards it. For instance, McKee et al. (2022) explore teachers' engagement with parents on the basis of Preston et al.'s (2018) extension of the model with the notion of family vibrancy, which accounts for "the family's linguistic, cultural, vocational, artistic, social, emotional, spiritual, and ethnic dimensions" as "important, valuable resources, which need to be included in parent involvement discourse" (Preston et al., 2018, p. 549). Such culturally responsive acknowledgements show the openness and potential that Epstein's conceptualisation still has to offer.

Synthetising Perspectives

The practice of synthetising different theoretical approaches and constructing new scales relevant to a particular cultural context is a very interesting phenomenon. While in some countries, such as Tanzania (Kigobe et al., 2021; Ndijuye & Tandika,

2022) or Peru (Nóblega et al., 2022), the researchers adopt or validate the existing Western scales of PI and academic achievement, researchers from other contexts, like Malaysia (Jayaraj et al., 2022), China (Luo et al., 2022; Pan et al., 2022; Yue et al., 2022), and Hong Kong (Tang et al., 2021), developed their own, locally sensitive measurement tools. Creating other theories, like one constructed for empowerment (De Los Santos Rodriguez et al., 2021), also occurred in this body of literature.

Literacies in/of/by Parental Involvement

Theories of literacy depart from different assumptions about (multi)literacies and are thus used in research with different aims. In recent years, studies have measured children's literacies as anchored in parental and home numeracy and literacy (Bonifacci et al., 2021; Junge et al., 2021; Kigboe et al., 2021; Silinskas et al., 2021; Sun & Ng, 2021; Wei et al., 2022), through activities like shared reading at home and preschool stimulation of language development (İnce Samur, 2021; Hu et al., 2021), as well as projects that promote the creation of reading cultures in dialogue and collaboration between home and ECEC settings (Hu et al., 2021). The same theories create a departure point for examining parental perceptions of literacy, homework, and learning experiences (Liang et al., 2022) or participation in home literacy programmes (Gillanders & Barak, 2022). Such a view of literacies has, however, also been criticised as reductionist and narrow (Jacobs et al., 2021), with the suggestion being made to form an alternative, reciprocal partnership in which literacies are promoted through the active use of families' linguistic and cultural resources (Jacobs et al., 2021). Volk (2021) also argues for enhancing literacies by building on the affordances of homes, neighbourhoods, and the broader city, as foregrounding children's expertise and creating collaborations between schools and community settings are crucial for holistic learning and well-being. Such culturally responsive approaches to literacies come either from critical identity theories (Cummins, 2001) or cultural-historical approaches, as in the article by Kajee and Sibanda (2019).

Back to Froebel

An interesting theoretical alternative is presented by Kambouri et al. (2022), who, by building on the Froebelian approach that emphasises "not only the importance families, but the striving for 'unity' in an understanding of how practitioners can work collaboratively with families, in the best interests of children" (p. 644), created sessions for families and professionals intended to empower both parts. Combining Froebel's work with their existing knowledge, the authors ended up framing their sessions with the following principles:

1. *Neutrality of power:* The partnership sessions took place outside of school settings.
2. *Respecting voices:* Participants shared their understandings of partnership and identified their own goals using their experiences and the unique nature of their settings and lifestyles.
3. *Reflection:* Participants reflected on their preconceptions of partnerships through sharing experiences and taking part in activities to re-examine how they could further develop their collaboration.
4. *Praxis:* During and after the implementation of the partnership sessions, participants were encouraged to apply their understanding of partnerships in their actual settings.
5. *Voice:* Participants shared their views and opinions in a safe, non-judgmental environment (pp. 644–655).

Narratives and Discourse

Another theory that emerged in only one chapter is narrative theory, which captures experience as a story embedded within the context of a particular culture, society, and economy and their underlying power relations (Bourdieu, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992; Foucault, 1981). Building on this approach, Eliyahu-Levi (2022) explores the experiences of African asylum-seeker families in Israel and identifies a tension between the family's sense of belonging, the desire to be more involved, and the reality of poverty that turns their days into experiences of working around the clock, which effectively precludes their presence in diverse activities at educational institutions. In their research on family pedagogies/literacies, Jacobs et al. (2021) present families' lingual and cultural practices as counternarratives that challenge the deficit discourse on migrant and Indigenous families. Challenging an established discourse by presenting an alternative surplus of meaning, as created in another context of culture and power, characterises the research employing discourse theory, as in the paper of Sadownik et al. (2021) where the theory is used to "unfreeze" the meanings connected to PI and social sustainability in different policy documents.

Biesta: The Other Community

The last theory appearing in articles published between 2021 and 2022 is Biesta's conceptualisation of community, as employed by Anderstaf et al. (2021) when exploring dilemmas encountered by preschool teachers when working in contexts of cultural and value-related diversity. A conceptual toolkit that helps to enter into and embrace the complexity of engaging with dilemmas is Biesta's (2004, 2006) distinction between *rational communities* and communities that have nothing in common with them, also called *other communities.* Building on Biesta, Anderstaf et al. (2021) understand a rational community as constituted by a common, identifiable language and institutional documents, which also narrows down what is

considered relevant and legitimate to articulate and focus on, and thus excludes those who are not "fluent in the language" (Anderstaf et al., 2021, p. 299) or who do not share the dominant rationality. The other community occurs in relation to the rational one by interrupting and troubling the "rational" and legitimate articulations. It allows one to embrace PI as not only the cultural reproduction of a particular rationality, but also as creating conditions for the other community to come into existence by creating opportunities for persons to be challenged to confront otherness and ask authentic questions, like "What do you think?"' and "How will you respond?"(Anderstaf et al., 2021, p. 300). As Anderstaf et al. (2021) conclude, it is in confronting this challenge of meeting the other that one's unique voice can appear.

Discussion: Aims Facilitated by Theoretical Toolkits

The existing systematisations of theories of PI can be applied when trying to generalise the aims/intentions of the analysed articles. Green (2017) distinguishes between the positivistic, interpretative, and critical epistemologies underlying educational research on partnerships between families and educational institutions. Below, I intend to show how the depicted theories are related to these systematisations and argue in favour of choosing the interpretative and critical ones for the next chapters of the book.

The positivist ambition to provide local and accurate knowledge that allows for certain outcomes to be predicted and controlled reduces PI to measurable causalities and impacts (of what are considered the right activities of the parents) on the academic achievement (of the child). Such an approach shines through the articles mentioned above that take for granted academic achievement as a common goal and operationalise it through the literacies and numeracies desired by schools. In this view, the family's perspectives and the culturally anchored practices of the supporting literacies are not of interest in themselves, but as activities that can be classified as positive or negative for (the taken-for-granted) future academic achievement. Green (2017) even classifies Epstein's model as positivistic. The review above shows however that this model can also serve very interpretive and critical aims. In some cases, the simple models can be extended by the empirical data (…),while in other cases the orientation towards academic achievement reduces theories that could serve other goals, such as social capital theory (Coleman, 1988).

As "in the interpretivist epistemology all knowledge and reality are created through social interactions between people and their world, and … within a social context" (Green, 2017, p. 375), the theories I classify into this group are those that support research on the importance of (contextual) understanding. This understanding may be related to the parental perspective (e.g. Ball, 2010; Bipath et al., 2022; Erdemir, 2022; Hewitt & Maloney, 2000; Murphy et al., 2021; Višnjić-Jevtić, 2021, Zhang et al., 2021), teachers' perspectives (Durmuşoğlu, 2022; Ekinci-Vural & Dogan-Altun, 2021; Grobler, 2022; Murphy et al., 2021), perspective of the child (Yngvesson & Garvis, 2021), the perspectives of other cultures (e.g. Ball, 2010;

Indigenous: Armstrong et al., 2022; Gapany et al., 2022, Sianturi et al., 2022; or im/migrant: Sawyer et al., 2022), involvement of elder generation (Guan et al., 2022; Raynal et al., 2022) or acknowledging families as first teachers (Ejuu and Opiyo (2022).

Creating context-enabling dialogues and exchanges of meaning, particularly about the goals of partnerships (Kambouri et al., 2022), is in line with this perspective. Those theories that supported such explorations include the cultural-historical perspective (e.g. Armstrong et al., 2022; Gillanders & Barak, 2022; Grobler, 2022), Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory (e.g. Ejuu & Opiyo, 2022; Erdemir, 2022; Wu, 2021; Zhang et al., 2021), quality theory (e.g. Bipath et al., 2022), and narrative theory (e.g. Eliyahu-Levi, 2022; Sanders et al., 2022). Their employment shows the practice of PI to be culturally anchored, value-related, and contextual, which could also explain their widespread application throughout the world.

The primary objective of critical theories is to change the order of things (Green, 2017). However, for this change to take place, they need to identify and understand the phenomena and practices that require it. This is done by exploring the conditions for the appearance of diverse understandings. The critical perspective is not satisfied with identifying the mere diversity of family practices; rather, the socio-economic conditions and power relations that helped establish such diversity are also to be examined (Maranhão & Sarti, 2008). As in the research of Eliyahu-Levi (2022), the stories of asylum seekers are connected to the context of poverty, which strengthens their desire to participate, but also blocks the real possibility of their involvement with the educational settings of their children; or in the research of Sengonul (2022) showing that academic achievement as a benefit from PI relates mainly to middle-class children. With the ambitions of shaking up the unjust, marginalised voices and experiences are presented so that mainstream institutions can become more sensitive to perspectives they exclude and oversee (Ball, 2010). In the work of Jacobs et al. (2021), Indigenous lingual and cultural practices are presented as counternarratives to the narrow, taken-for-granted perspectives of early reading and numeracy affirmed in educational settings. Analogical empowerment of multiliteracies and different ways of knowing established in different home cultures takes place in the article of Taylor et al. (2008). Nagel and Wells (2009) on the other hand open the model of Epstein for ways of engagement with educational institutions that is more responsive to meanings and ways of being anchored in Indigenous cultures.

The critical perspective assumes that there is nothing like a neutral position, and that everything serves one or another agenda, whether it be articulated or silently assumed. It may therefore be more ethical for researchers to be transparent about their own normative standpoints. Such a normative commitment is declared in research employing Fraser's theory of social justice when arguing for the inclusion of low-income families (Fenech & Skattebol, 2021), or in the writings of researchers inspired by Biesta's concept of the *other community*, which strongly encourage authenticity and confrontation of the otherness (Anderstaf et al., 2021). Descriptions resisting and challenging the perspectives of "lack" that have been established in relation to some groups may be also seen as the critical ones (Souto-Manning & Swick, 2006).

Conclusion: Selecting Theories for the Next Chapters of the Book

Theories that have the potential to effectively account for the understanding of more-than-parental involvement presented in Chap. 1 are those of an interpretative and critical character. It seems that there is a desire for a continuously deeper understanding of both the diversity of perspectives that exists, but also the underlying power relations and discourses "freezing" the meanings connected to parental *part*icipation. This means that of the theories presented in the above literature review, the following are to be included:

1. The cultural-historical wholeness approach, which presents PI not only as a cultural practice, but also as an institutional and personal one framed by the existing social apparatus (Hedegaard, 2005, 2009; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008); such an approach embraces diverse more-than-parental relationships and is able to depict important tensions that arise in overcoming the democratic deficit (Van Leare et al., 2018).
2. Ecological systems theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), which suggests that by recognising the child's being and becoming in the complex ecology of relationships and social systems, there is the potential to embrace the more-than-parental, intergenerational, and political (democratic) aspects of families collaborating with ECECs.
3. The theory of social capital (Coleman, 1998; Putnam, 2000), which considers relationships and access to new interactions as genuinely resourceful ways to enable deeper understandings of more-than-parental involvement; however, its focus on function and "benefit" may exclude the intrinsic value of being together.
4. Models of parental involvement developed by Epstein (1990, 1992, 2001, 2010, 2011) and Hornby (2000, 2011).
5. Partnership and collaboration theories (Colbry et al., 2014; Keyes, 2002; Keyser, 2006).
6. The social theory of Bourdieu (1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992).
7. The theory of practice architectures (Kemmis et al., 2014).
8. Discourse theory (on ECEC quality) and narrative inquiry (Dahlberg et al., 2013).

Additionally, the posthuman theoretical perspective – or agential realism – is going to be included. As a theory that challenges the taken-for-granted perception of PI as a human–human phenomenon, it has the potential to shed new light on the artefacts being used in culturally responsive ways to facilitate ECEC's engagement with parents. Moreover, as stated by Rosiek et al. (2020), this theory can account for Indigenous ontologies in terms of acknowledging the agency of non-human elements, which can result in extending the "more-than-parental" into the acknowledgement of intergenerational relationships in the family, as well as a radically relational perception of the materiality that constitutes diverse cultures.

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Chapter 3
Cultural-Historical Wholeness Approach: *Critical* Activity Settings of More-Than-Parental Involvement

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Abstract This chapter starts with a description of the cultural-historical wholeness approach as a theory of child development. The theory's considerable focus on the context in which such development takes place makes it capable of theorising the collaboration between different institutions that constitutes the developmental situation of the child. The concepts of an *activity setting*, in which both societal demands and individual motives intersect, and a *crisis* are described as productive tools for reflecting on different modes of more-than-parental involvement in ECEC. As an interpretative theory, this toolkit does not impose any particular model of parental involvement, but instead allows for reflection on the conditions that allow for different practices to appear, thus locating the level of eventual change-making.

Keywords Activity setting · Cultural-historical wholeness approach · Demands · Values · Parents

Understanding the Theory as a Theory of Child Development

The Vygotsky-inspired cultural-historical wholeness approach developed by Hedegaard (2005, 2009) and Fleer (2010; Fleer & Hedegaard, 2010; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008) perceives individuals' activities as always contextual, situated, and inseparable from their socio-cultural surroundings. While Vygotsky describes the context in very general terms, Hedegaard (2009, 2012, 2014) offers a systematic model of it.

Her theoretical modelling starts with the perspective of *society*, with its legal apparatus, cultures, and traditions, the model allows for consideration of the

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dynamics of the historical process through which the society has been created, and in which values and traditions have become laws and regulations.

These values and traditions are also related to the *institutional* perspective, where, together with regulations and laws, they constitute the institutional demands and expectations with which the institutions meet different individuals. Individuals respond to these demands by developing different motives and activities. These motives can either confirm or challenge the expectations implied in institutional activity settings. The activity settings thus intersect with the institutional demands and individual motives and activities, which make the *activity setting* the lens through which the dialectics between the human and the context become visible. These are dialectics in which both the human and the context are reconstituted, and neither side determines, but co-constitutes the other.

The model visualised by Hedegaard (2012, p. 130) provides some orientation through this complexity by drawing clear "bobbles" of the societal, institutional, and personal contexts shaping individual motives and activities. Fleer et al. (2009) have further shown how awareness of the societal perspective creates room for challenging and re-thinking Western hegemony's definition and diagnosis of the child's developmental milestones, including criteria for classifying developmental paths as "normal" or "deviated." The societal level, including laws, cultural traditions, and values, can be related to very diverse (non-Western) countries and communities, which brings transparency and clarity to the idea that children around the globe grow in relation to very different expectations and demands, which they respond to by developing relevant motives, activities, and competences. Thus, the cultural-historical wholeness approach displaces the Western matrix of developmental indicators that is often placed on children who grow up in distinctive localities; instead, it promotes a deeper understanding of the child's *developmental situation* within the context in which the child grows up.

With the concept of the *developmental situation of the child*, Hedegaard tries to capture the complexity and dynamics of the global and local dimensions (Fleer et al., 2009), or the macro and micro levels (Schousboe & Winther-Lindqvist, 2013), mediated by the activity settings offered to the child in different institutions. The diverse demands encountered here do not have to stay within their particular cultures. In a context of diverse, multicultural societies with distinctive family configurations living different lifestyles, the child belonging to the majority culture can meet very different and even opposing traditions and demands in the different institutions that the child attends.

Fleer and Hedegaard (2010) showed how the different traditions underpinning practices at home and preschool may result in a huge transition for a child. They draw on an example of a boy, Andrew, whose *family practices* are characterised by "simultaneous participation structures for communicating," "machine gun fire communication," and "geographical roaming" (p. 155). These practices stimulate the development of competences and activities that are not in line with the *teacher's demands*, the latter of which are connected to individual orientation and a focus on developing new skills (like practising to write the letter "A"). To cope with the

transition between these two contexts, Andrew develops some transition practices like "geographical scanning" and "strategic positioning" (p. 155).

The transition disposition may become more difficult to develop in cases where the family's and school's demands are anchored in very different value positions and cultural traditions. Using the example of children from a Turkish family in Denmark, Hedegaard (2005) shows the need for a communication platform between the school and family institutions to avoid confusing conflicts of demands, which may not be beneficial for the child's development and well-being.

Together, these two examples (Fleer & Hedegaard, 2010; Hedegaard, 2005) show how this theory's conceptualisation of child development leads to the realisation of the importance of the interaction and collaboration between the institutions involved in the child's daily life, which in these cases are the (pre)school setting and the child's family. This theory enables the theorisation of interactions between the ECEC setting and the family by linking the institutions. Knowing that each one of them has its own activity settings may raise the question of what form the activity settings occur in/through which ECEC and a family interact. In other words, it raises question of power relation and social actors deciding on modes of parental involvement and areas of influence (Van Laere et al., 2018).

Cultural-Historical Wholeness Approach as a Theory of Parental Involvement: The Activity Setting

The focus of the cultural-historical wholeness approach on the whole context allows for more-than-parental involvement to be captured in its global-local, socio-cultural, and also interpersonal surroundings. The concept of the *activity setting*, a perspective where both the socio-cultural and the personal perspectives intersect, then becomes of particular interest. In this case, both the macro and micro dimensions of ECEC's collaboration with parents come into play. The institutional belonging of an activity setting, in which both the family and the ECEC staff can interact, can vary in nature from the family's home, an ECEC setting, or somewhere "in-between." Figure 3.1 shows how such an activity setting (where a family and ECEC staff can meet each other and interact) is related to the following:

- The laws and regulations, as well as the cultural values, that shape the activity settings through the demands imposed on the institutions (families and ECEC).
- The cultural values that through the demands influence parental/families' motives when creating/entering activity settings (of families' involvement).
- The culturally anchored value positions and meanings that shape the ECEC staff's motives when both creating and entering an activity setting (of families' involvement).

The laws and regulations shaping these activity settings may be anchored in different kinds of steering documents. In the majority of countries, it is the ECEC
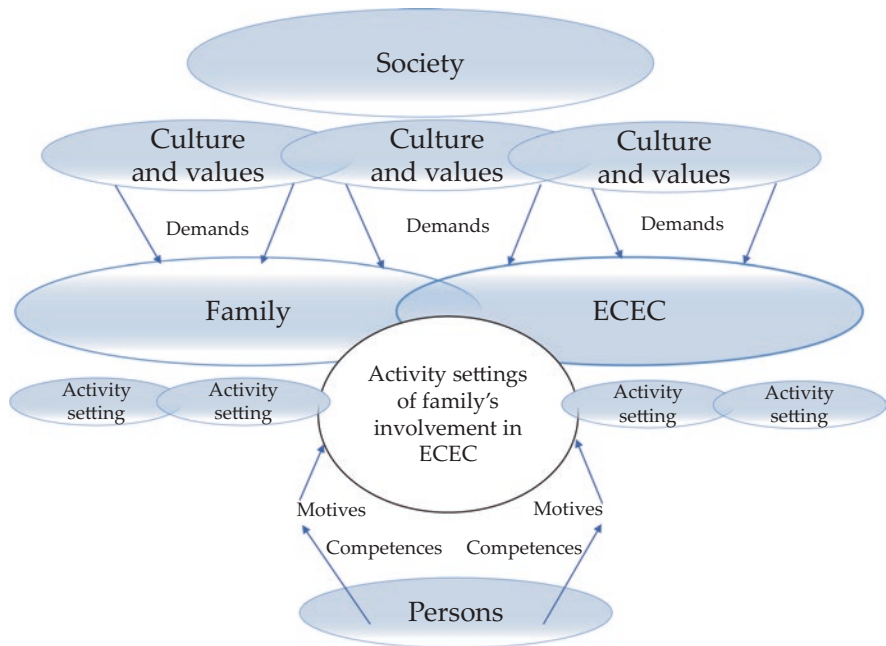
Fig. 3.1 Activity settings of families' involvement in ECEC. (Source: Own elaboration, inspired by the model of children's activity settings in different institutions of Hedegaard, 2012, p. 130)

curriculum or the framework's programmes and plans that point to important values or goals that shall be achieved through ECEC's collaborations with the children's caregivers. Specifically, Bennet (2010) shows the different values underpinning the two main traditions of ECEC, the preschool tradition and the social pedagogy tradition, and the different activity settings for children in ECEC settings that these traditions imply. Analogically, the activity settings for more-than-parental involvement are shaped by the cultural values and traditions of ECEC practices. In societies where the steering documents highlight the children's school readiness, like in England (Early Years Foundation Stage, 2017), or where the necessity to "complement and support family education" is emphasised (MSMT, 2018, p. 67, quoted in Kampichler, 2022, p. 65), as in Czech Republic, the activity settings may be different from those in countries like Poland, where the curriculum for ECEC obligates the staff only "to inform" the parents about the child's developmental progress (Sadownik & Lewandowska, 2022), or Hong Kong, where the steering document describes ECEC's collaboration with parents with verbs like "inform, involve, arrange, invite, provide, [and] encourage" (Hu, 2022, p. 129).

Epstein's (2011) typology of parental involvement in educational institutions, which is discussed in the 6th chapter, points out several forms of parental involvement. These include parenting, communication, learning at home, volunteering, decision-making, and collaboration with the community. Each of these forms, if present in a particular socio-cultural context, would unfold different activity

settings through which this type of involvement is practised.What is perhaps most important is that the cultural-historical wholeness approach allows us to see the activity setting of parental involvement as being established in a dialectics of cultural values and institutional procedures over time. This means that the activity settings and forms of parental involvement are established long before a particular family enters an ECEC setting with a baby or a toddler. As Van Laere et al. (2018) have put it, "it seems that the goals and modalities of parental involvement are defined without involvement of parents" (p. 189). The authors call this a *democratic deficit* that brings forth the risk of instrumentalising participation and reducing parents to mere spectators of their alleged problems. Looking at this democratic deficit through the cultural-historical wholeness lens allows us to understand the historical process in which the activity settings for parental involvement have been shaped, with the possibility of previous generations of parents/caregivers influencing later forms of collaboration. This might imply that certain parents have indeed little to say about the activity settings through which they can collaborate with the ECEC institutions, but throughout the years in which their child is there, they can develop motives for changing their ways of being involved, which again will be defined in advance for the upcoming generations of parents.

What this theory also moves us to realise is that individual motives may not be enough to change institutional practices, as the ECEC setting is enmeshed within many contextual powers. The activity settings of parental involvement are intertwined with the cultural values of the majority and all of their traditions. The majority of discourses underpinning the activity settings for the interaction between parents and staff tend to marginalise parents of minority backgrounds (Solberg, 2018; Sianturi et al., 2022) and lower socio-economic status (Crozier, 2001; Lareau & MacNamara Horvat, 1999; Lareau et al., 2016), particularly those who do not have the opportunity to learn the tacit social codes underpinning the activity settings (Sønsthagen, 2020).

However, as the cultural-historical wholeness approach always asks about the *conditions for appearance* (Dafermos, 2022; Vygostky, 1997) of ongoing practices, it challenges the tacit obviousness of diverse routines and procedures. If the ECEC institution does not acknowledge the "family's linguistic, cultural, vocational, artistic, social, emotional, spiritual, and ethnic dimensions" (Preston et al., 2018, p. 549), this theoretical toolkit will allow us to locate the reason(s). In illuminating the diverse aspects of ECEC's intertwining relationship with society, the cultural-historical wholeness approach can help distinguish between the majority values dominating the framework plan for ECEC and the attitudes of the ECEC staff, one of which is the strong belief that an existing practice is the best one (Tobin et al., 2013).

In situations in which families co-create activity settings for their own participation, or when such settings are imposed by either the ECEC staff, a parental board, or simply tradition, reflection can be motivated by asking for the *conditions of appearance* (Dafermos, 2022; Vygotsky, 1997). The cultural-historical wholeness approach serves as a conceptual toolkit for reflecting on and locating the factors that facilitate and reproduce activity settings, motives, and practices. Relating the

practice to cultural values, formal regulations, or other conditions allows for reflection over possible activities that allow for change. However, according to Vygotsky, change also emerges through a crisis.

The Worse – The Better: The Crisis of a "Misbehaving" Parent

Vygotsky (1998) relates crises to a clear trajectory of change and challenge. He describes a crisis in the development of the child as a situation in which, "in a very short time, the child changes completely in the basic traits of his personality. Development takes on a stormy, impetuous, and sometimes catastrophic character that resembles a revolutionary course of events in both the rate of the changes that are occurring and in the sense of the alterations that are made" (p. 191).

An individual misbehaving in an institutional setting is usually an individual from whom the demands of the setting/institution are hidden, or who experienced a radical change of demands due to shifting institutional contexts (Fleer & Hedegaard, 2010). In such cases, all the other actors in a social situation usually take the demands for granted. Rather than explicate the rules of the situation, they assume that they go without saying.

A parent or family member who enters an ECEC setting without knowing about the tacit demands of the activity settings – whether it be a parental meeting, a parental conference, or a daily "delivering" or "picking up" routine – risks awkwardness, discomfort, and miscommunication. The accumulation of such situations may become a crisis. However, a crisis, in this theoretical context, is not entirely negative, and is instead best construed as part of the coming change. When attempting to reconstruct Vygotsky's understanding of crisis, Dafermos (2022) stated that "the concept of crisis is not an isolated concept but a moment of a dialectical account of the contradictory, developmental process as a dialectical unity of qualitative and quantitative changes, profession and regression, emergence and disappearance" (p. 8). This is to say that a crisis is a "space of the developmental act" (Dafermos, 2022, p. 9), or an opening up of pathways for determining the "complex links between the internal and external tensions and conflicts that serve as a driving force of development" (p. 9).

Asking for the *conditions of appearance* (Dafermos, 2022; Vygotsky, 1997) of a "misbehaving more-than-parent," as when a grandparent asks about things that are irrelevant or uncommon during a pick-up, or a parent starts singing during a parental meeting – enables one to realise the tacit life of the concrete demands of an activity setting. As soon as the demands are transparent, it is possible to renegotiate them.

The cultural-historical wholeness approach and the concept of crisis allow for the continuous renegotiation of demands, as well as the trying out of new forms of activity settings, differently anchored in other cultural traditions and values, so that diverse parents can experience their resources and competencies as relevant to participation. This suggests that this theoretical approach encourages exploring

alternative methods of addressing the behavior of "misbehaving more-than-parents" beyond simply instructing them to conform to the demands of a specific activity setting. According to Dafermos (2022), when digging into the historical meaning of the concept, a crisis can be understood as a "decisive turning point" (p. 3) in the trajectory of diseases or wars, or a moment "when everything is possible" (p. 3), and the course of a human activity, or a historical process in general can take an unpredictable and even revolutionary direction. In other words, thinking with this theoretical toolkit inspires to co-create activity setting with negotiable demands, thereby allowing parents/families to get involved in diverse ways. For example: a parental meeting where we only sing and make music, or where the parents come together to make toys for the children."

Enabling dialogue and negotiation of activity settings for parental involvement, rather than immediately working to resolve the crisis, is about taking continuous advantage of it through unceasing collaboration. The potential for crisis, according to Vygotsky (1997, 1998) and Dafermos (2022), lies in the dialectics between conflicting forces and the tensions between co-existing alternatives and agonisms. Opening up a communicative space for the exchange of conflicting meanings can accelerate the birth of new forms, forms generated with and not without the parents (Van Laere et al., 2018). Such a strategy could, however, also lead to chaos and confusion, as discussed in the study of Morrow and Malin (2004), who show how an increased level of empowerment exacerbates disagreements and thus many dilemmas for educators meeting the parents. However, the (agonistic) meanings appearing in the space and the empowered voices articulating them could also make the dialectics of the cultures, values, and traditions involved in the variety of activity settings more visible.

The cultural-historical wholeness approach is based on an awareness of the ongoing historical process, with its values and demands. Informing parents about the existing demands of the activity settings that parental involvement comprises and "equipping" them with the tools that allow them to enter into the existing activity settings is not necessarily negative and undemocratic. Knowing the demands of a setting allows one to communicate their own issues in the right time and place, to the relevant ears, and thus be heard. Communicating meanings in a way that the listeners (i.e. ECEC staff or other parents) resonate with can transfer the dialectics between the values and traditions from which the ECEC and the parents operate to the existing activity settings and thus possibly transform them therefrom. In other words, knowing how to approach and participate in the recognised activity settings could be the only way of changing them, and thus just the start of the transformation process.

Conclusion

As a conclusion, I will relate this theoretical approach to the aspects of parental involvement that were highlighted in the first chapter, which were (a) the more-than-parental, intergenerational approach to the home-ECEC relationship; (b) the recognition of genuine parental belonging to children's lives; and (c) the value of conflict and disagreement. The cultural-historical wholeness approach does not impose any kind of parental or more-than-parental involvement, but rather relates the existing forms of families to the values and demands living or appearing in the social contexts of institutions. These values/demands can be either resisted or confirmed by individual motives. This means that in the case of an intergenerational family appearing at a parental meeting, this approach allows challenging the established values by asking, "Who do we value as a caregiver, and who do we assume to come to parental meetings, if grandparents attending a parental conference together with parents is such a big shock for us?"

In relation to the next aspect, the cultural-historical wholeness approach recognises the family as a very important context of the life and development of the child. This is to say that this theory would rather ask questions about the *conditions for the appearance* of practices in which families are not acknowledged by ECEC.

This does not, however, mean that the relationship between ECEC and family needs to be harmonic and free of conflicts. As this theory builds on dialectics, or the continuous exchange of contradictory forces, connections, disconnections, tensions, and drama (Dafermos, 2022), it sees agonist disagreement as a perpetual power of the historical process and improvements. This means that the value of conflict is implied in this theorisation of more-than-parental involvement.

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Chapter 4
Bronfenbrenner: Ecology of Human Development in Ecology of Collaboration

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Abstract This chapter begins with a short presentation of the historical and biographical context of Bronfenbrenner's research, which is followed by a description of his theory of an ecology of human development. This idea is presented both as a theory of child development and a theory of collaboration, as it is often the latter form that is applied in research on cooperation between early childhood education and care (ECEC) and parents/caregivers. The discussion addresses the ways in which Bronfenbrenner's theory is currently applied in research on ECEC-family cooperation. In concluding remarks, the applications of the theory in relation to the understanding of more-than-parental involvement are presented in Chap. 1.

Keywords Bronfenbrenner · Child · Development · Ecology · Involvement · Mesosystem

Short Context of the Theory

Urie Bronfenbrenner (1917–2005), as a Jewish, Russian-born psychologist whose family escaped to the United States in his early years, acquired lived experience of how one's societal surroundings can change the social trajectory of a family and the individuals that create it. After graduating from the developmental psychology department at Harvard, he started a PhD project at the University of Michigan, where his focus was on children's development in the context of their peer groups. This relational and contextual focus on human development became the core thread of his further academic work and political activism. Bronfenbrenner was invited to the US Congress and a diverse array of governmental expert groups, where he managed to challenge the established view of biological/genetical determinism and

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provide American society with a wider, more contextual explanation of why the American Dream is not achieved by every individual, and how there are ecological reasons for why some children end up poor, homeless, or at risk of other adverse experiences. Reflection on the diverse developmental paths that arise as consequences of events happening in different settings directly impacting the child, as well as the interactions and relations between those settings within a broader context of socio-economy and cultural norms, brought Bronfenbrenner to develop the ecological model of environment "as a set of nested structures, each inside the next, like a set of Russian dolls" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3). Among these "nested structures," he underlined the roles of both the actors and settings that directly interact with the child (e.g., the family, pre-school, and peers), as well as the types of relationships that exist among these actors and settings.

Ecology of Nested Structures as a Theory of Human Development

Analogical to the cultural-historical wholeness approach presented in the first chapter, ecological systems theory highlights the social context and complexity of the relationships that contextualise and constitute a child's life and development. The "set of nested structures, each inside the next" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 3) draws a model of bigger and bigger circles of influence surrounding the child. None of the systems (micro-, meso-, exo, etc.) operates in a vacuum, but is instead interconnected with all the others. In such an ecology (of nested structures), a human being *becomes*. The process of becoming entwines the individual and the social surroundings in a dialectics of accommodation. As Bronfenbrenner (1979) put it,

> The ecology of human development involves the scientific study of the progressive, mutual accommodation between an active, growing human being and the changing properties of the immediate settings in which the developing person lives, as this process is affected by relations between these settings, and by the larger contexts within which the settings are embedded. (p. 21)

Bronfenbrenner also underlines how the larger contexts change over time, which again are interrelated with the child, her development, and the conditions that allow for it, as well as the (developmental) changes that happen over time in the child herself. All of these factors have their own impacts on the surroundings. It is thus possible to say that Bronfenbrenner (1975) focused on "how environments change, and the implications of this change for the human beings who live and grow in these environments" (p. 439).

The different ecological environments, "each inside the next," are systematised by Bronfenbrenner in the following way:

- The *microsystem(s)* includes the people and elements of the environment that have direct contact with the child (e.g., parents, siblings, teachers, ECE, school,

and peers), who influence the child's life, and whose lives may be changed/influenced through interacting with the child.

- The *mesosystem*, also called the system of microsystems, is the system that encompasses the interactions between a child's microsystems, referring directly to the collaboration between ECE and parents as the main microsystems of a young child's life.
- The *exosystem* relates to the larger formal and informal social structures that the child does not participate in directly, but that still have an impact on the child's life, well-being, and development. This layer includes the parents' workplaces and their schedules, networks, friendships, and so on.
- The *macrosystem* is the general socio-cultural context that includes the legal framework, cultural values, customs, and principles. This layer also includes the infrastructure of ECE, as well as the diverse types of economic and social support for parents in different life situations.
- The *chronosystem* includes both the timing and ageing of the life of the child and family, as well as historical changes in the socio-cultural environment.

The idea of looking at the child through her closest social surroundings and relationships (microsystems) was present in psychological research before Bronfenbrenner. However, his reach beyond the micro and mesosystem indicates his intent to seek less transparent connections and influences on the child's life, "such as decisions made by the manager of a setting, the quality of the parents' workplace, social media and informal social networks" (Halpenny et al., 2017, p. 16). These are included in the exosystem, which, in more indirect ways, shapes the everyday lives of a child and a parent. The length of parental leaves, the availability of ECEC services, and the existence of family networks, as well as parental working hours and the presence of neighbours and the local community, are the significant elements of the exosystem, which are again connected to the macrosystem with the power of its legal apparatus and redistribution of economic resources that enable or limit diverse solutions and interconnections in the life of a family and an ECEC setting.

What is important to highlight is that both the macrosystem and exosystem, as well as the mesosystem, microsystem, and the individuals participating in them, change over time. The time aspect is included in the chronosystem and shows how the appearance of a child's daily life may have changed over time, and that the childhood of our grandparents was completely different than hours, both in terms of access to ECEC, toys, and technologies, but also in terms of the people we spent time with during the first years of our lives.

As this is a theory of human development, Bronfenbrenner places the child at the centre. This positioning is supposed to demonstrate that the child, to a great degree, is influenced by her context; however, it also highlights the child's agency and potential influence. Such a model makes the child a subject and agent and not a passive "product" of her own surroundings, thus providing conditions for intellectual, emotional, social, and moral development:

> A child requires participation in progressively more complex reciprocal activity on a regular basis over an extended period in the child's life, with one or more persons with whom the child develops a strong, mutual, irrational, emotional attachment and who is committed to the child's well-being and development, preferably for life. (Bronfenbrenner, 1991, p. 2)

This quote becomes the basis for the following famous phrase in Bronfenbrenner's speeches: *Every child needs at least one adult who is irrationally crazy about him or her.* This irrationally crazy engagement shall also, however, characterise interconnections at the level of the mesosystem. This focus on the interconnections makes the ecological systems theory, a theory of collaboration that enables us to see and operationalise the "crazy engagement" of diverse institutions involved in the child's life and in different socio-cultural settings, but which also enables us to spot the insufficient level of influence, leading to disadvantaged biographical paths.

Ecology of Child Development as a Theory of Collaboration: A Focus on Linkages

The "crazy engagement" of diverse institutional partners in the child's well-being and well-becoming relates to the concept of linkages. Bronfenbrenner describes linkages as interactions between at least two actors from different microsystems, such as the family and the ECEC setting, or the ECEC setting and the future school of the child. The interactions are constitutive for the second level of influence at the mesosystem; however, their quality can differ, and not each of them can be characterised as a form of "crazy engagement." Nevertheless, each will be *interlocking* and intermeshing the interacting partners. This means that the interactions in the mesosystem have a mutual influence on the practices in each of the interacting microsystems, which effectively makes the child's transitions between the microsystems smoother.

The theory itself allows to capture all kinds of linkages and reflect on how the diverse actors and institutions involved in the child's development can either strengthen or counteract each other's influence, as well as how they can either strengthen or resist the effect of exo- and macrosystems on the child's (well-)being and (well-)becoming. A mesosystem consisting of efficient inter-locked microsystems has indeed the potential to neutralise inequalities generated at the exo- and macrosystem in different ways.

Parental involvement is unmasked as a practice that strengthens the asymmetries and inequalities generated at the level of exo- and macro-systems in research showing the white middle-class premises underlying the established expectations of parents in this context (Eliyahu-Levi, 2022; Sengonul, 2022; Uysal Bayrak et al., 2021). However, there are also examples of programmes that help families develop the competences and resources expected by educational institutions (Gedal Douglass et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021) and create diverse arenas of involvement that are accessible to all parents. Another way of mitigating inequalities consists of opening up educational institutions to incorporate the families' lingual, cultural, spiritual,

and intergenerational resources and transforming institutional practices into ones more responsive to families' cultures and needs (McKee et al., 2022; Warren & Locklear, 2021). This, in turn, allows the children/families to become resourceful participants who have a lot to share and can thus flourish (Ejuu & Opiyo, 2022). Nevertheless, just participation may require "equipping for inclusion" and "enabling access" before engagement and the negotiation of the terms of participation are even possible (Fenech & Skattebol, 2021).

Discussing Applications of Bronfenbrenner's Theory – A Scoping Literature Review

Even though the theory of ecological systems can be related to the diverse linkages and collaborations between micro-, meso-, macro-, and exosystems, it is not guaranteed to be employed in this way. To identify the various applications of the theory, I conducted a scoping literature review of research on parental involvement in (early childhood) education that includes works on ecological systems theory published in the form of academic journal articles within the last 20 years (i.e., since 2002).

The review was initiated on the EBSCOhost Research Databases interface, through which the following databases were accessed: *ERIC*, *Teacher Reference Centre*, and *Academic Search Elite*. The key words:

+ Bronfenbrenner or ecological system*.
+ parent* or family* or mother* or father*.
+ involvement or engagement.

As presented in Fig. 4.1, the total number of hits was 26, three of which were duplicates and were removed from the search. Three of the papers turned to use Bronfenbrenner's theory in children's medicine and were excluded by me. All of the 20 included articles were retrieved and screened. During the first screening, it turned out that only 3 of the articles were related to ECEC. The other however were relevant for discussion on how the theory is applied. The 20 articles were then divided into 3 overlapping groups. The first applied the theory as a theory of child development (n = 11), the other as a theory of collaboration (n = 8), and the third comprised articles directly related to ECEC (n = 3).

Applying Bronfenbrenner's Theory of Child Development

In 11 of the articles, ecological systems theory was applied as a theory of child development, with the intention of verifying more nuanced connections, linkages, and causalities that collaborations at the mesosystem can have on one or another aspect of a child's development. The aim of finding more nuanced causalities led the
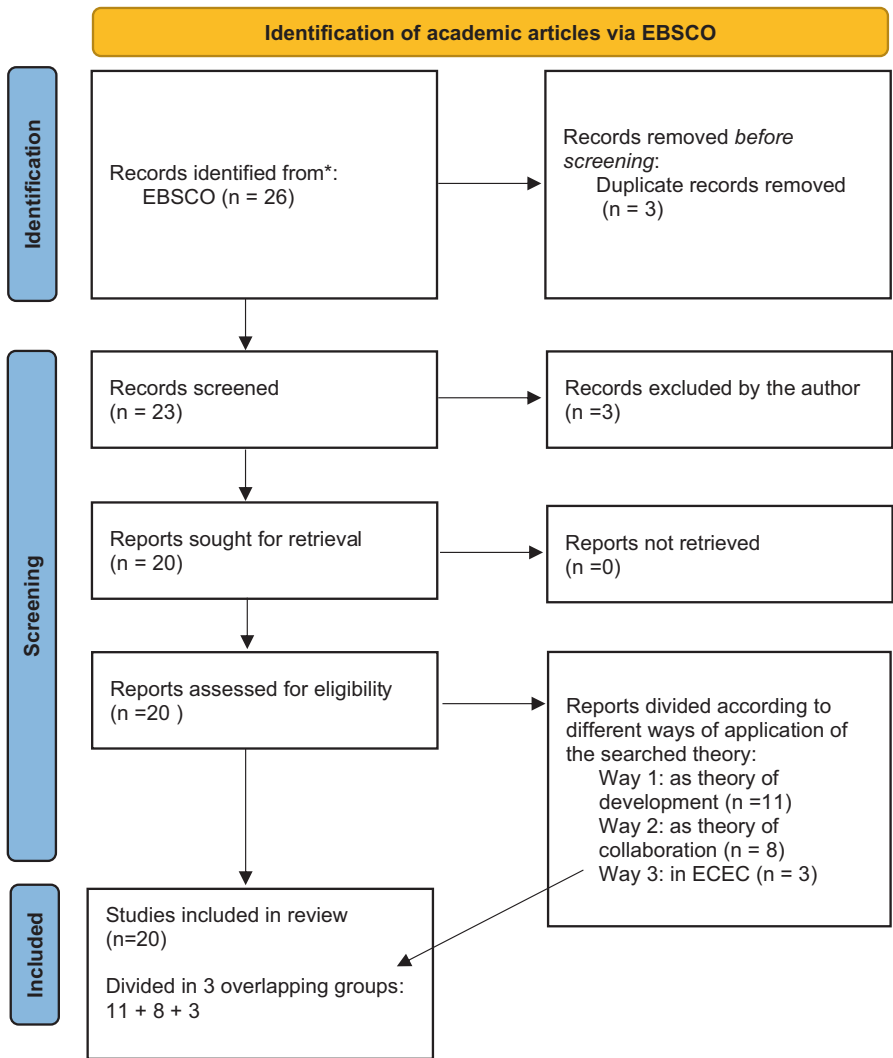
Fig. 4.1 Prisma flow diagram on the search in EBSCOhost Research Databases interface (December 2022)

authors to narrow the child's development and operationalise it, for example, as academic outcomes (Day & Dotterer, 2018), academic achievement (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017), early language and literacy skills (Kim & Riley, 2021), risk/protective factors for bullying (Espelage, 2014; Hong & Espelage, 2012), bullying involvement (Hong et al., 2021), intrapersonal intelligence of girls (Sheoran et al., 2019a), musical intelligence (Sheoran et al., 2019b), mental health (Ziaei & Hammarström, 2021), mental health in war (Diab et al., 2018), and

children's music lives (Ilari et al., 2019). These diverse aspects of child development were presented as the focus of the research, with a connection being made to both the research gap in a particular academic field and Bronfenbrenner's theory.

However, with the use of ecological systems theory, the way in which diverse studies conducted in different cultures and countries narrowed/operationalised child development is worthy of attention. The meanings, values, and rules of the exo- and macrosystems make different aspects of child development important, and worthy of academic focus, so that correlation between particular conditions for development and development of a particular ability/skills could be proven. These studies, however, did not use Bronfenbrenner's theory to justify their own focus on a particular aspect of development, but to generally justify their search for the connection between a specific aspect of child development and a characteristic of a microsystem (Diab et al., 2018; Sheoran et al., 2019a, b), mesosystem (An & Hodge, 2013; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Holt et al., 2008; Iruka et al., 2020; Keyes, 2002; McBrien, 2011), or macrosystem (Ziaei & Hammarström, 2021).

The potential blind spots in such applications of the theory lie in the narrow focus of these studies. These blind spots are not only in the operationalisations of the child's development, but also in the choices of staying at the microsystem level. One can ask how *ecological* it is to relate one aspect of the development, such as interpersonal intelligence, musical intelligence of girls, and mental health in war, to parenting styles (Sheoran et al., 2019a, b), parents' depressive symptoms, peer relations, or particular teacher practices (Diab et al., 2018) without realising the mesosystem in which all of the actors communicate, negotiate, and (dis)harmonise their influence on the children. An intriguing application of the Bronfenbrenner's theory to challenge the established methodologies of measuring human development is presented by Koller et al. (2020). The authors create ecological engagement methodology that emphasizes the individual's interactions with people, objects and symbols as crucial and measurable aspects of development.

Applying Ecological Systems as a Theory of Collaboration

When classifying the various implementations of Bronfenbrenner's theory as a theory of collaboration, I used the criterion of active involvement based on the mesosystem perspective in the research. As the mesosystem is about relationships and partnerships between institutions constituting the child's different microsystems, I chose research that embraced the relationship between two such institutions/organisations, which reduced the number of analysed articles to eight. This will say that articles such as the one of Kulik and Sadeh (2015) on fathers' involvement in childcare as a phenomenon depending on the occupation and working hours of the mothers, rural/urban context of the family living, fathers' experiences from own childhood and the child's temperament were not included, as they focus on sharing the care task in the parental team (and not on partnerships between diverse institutions constituting the mesosystem). The included articles encompassed both

home and an institutional settings of education/care involved in the child's daily life. Even though the collaboration between the institutions was connected to the child, the analysed articles varied in ways they included the child perspective.

One article (Yngvesson & Garvis, 2021) included the child as a central subject and actor in the collaboration between home and pre-school. Other articles focused on particular activities undertaken by the mesosystem's actors (Kim & Riley, 2021) or on the characteristics of the relationships between them (An & Hodge, 2013; Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Holt et al., 2008; Iruka et al., 2020; Keyes, 2002; McBrien, 2011), and the eventual influence of these relationships on the child's development (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; McBrien, 2011).

In trying to find more linkages mediating the (far too) simple causality between parental involvement and children's academic outcomes, the researchers engaged with different nests of Bronfenbrenner's model. Some invented and verified more variables at the mesosystem, such as parental satisfaction with the school, which turned out to mediate their involvement in it (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017). Others (McBrien, 2011) searched for explanations at the exo- and mesosystem levels when observing that the same parental strategies of getting involved with the school (e.g., school-based or home-based involvement) undertaken by parents representing diverse minorities led to different/opposite effects in children's academic socialisation and thus academic outcomes.

In a study on very young children (Kim & Riley, 2021), the academic outcomes were adjusted to the developmental level of the child and interpreted as a base for future academic outcomes. Even though the focus on school performance is anchored in the culture and traditions of ECEC (Bennett, 2010), the study did not relate to the macrosystem at all. Nevertheless, it explored the effect of a particular form of home-based involvement on early language and literacy skills. A particular method (i.e., dialogical reading) was introduced to the early years' teachers, who again communicated it to the parents and gave them an assignment, which consisted of reading for the children at least three times per week. The measurements taken in the intervention and control groups revealed that dialogical reading significantly affected the four components of language and literacy skills, regardless of the family's characteristics. Even though the researchers concluded by proving Bronfenbrenner's hypothesis on the benefits of parental involvement, it is also important to mention that inducting such a one-sided knowledge transfer (from academics to teachers, or from teachers to parents) and introducing particular activities at the children's homes is also a way of overlooking diverse homes' cultures and assuming that they are not stimulating enough. The very narrow focus of this study, both in terms of the child's development in language and literacy and parental involvement narrowed to a particular home-based activity, allows to identify a new causality (that Bronfenbrenner encouraged us to find), but it also ignores the different values of early childhood education, as well as different understandings of early childhood and the character of the relationships between parents and ECEC settings.

The relatively narrow focus of this study contrasts other kinds of studies, which assumed the mesosystem's effect on the child (based on ecological systems theory) and focused on gaining deeper insight into what is happening in the mesosystem

and how the different actors involved perceive it. An and Hodge (2013) used phenomenological inquiry to explore parental involvement in physical education for children with developmental disabilities and drew a complex picture of themes important for the parents when advocating for their own child in communication at school, becoming a team with other parents of children with disabilities, and collaborating with diverse organisations for children/families with disabilities. Studies like this one do not discover or prove new, more nuanced casualties between or among the systems, but allow us to understand the complexity and richness of this level in different local contexts, with the intent of having an impact on policies facilitating learning opportunities for all children.

A focus on children's early learning opportunities is also presented in a study of rural contexts and the characteristics of the nested systems within them (Iruka et al., 2020). By using Bronfenbrenner's model as a matrix, the researchers studied 10 rural school districts and re-constructed the diverse resources (and lacks), as well as networks and collaborations (that should be enabled, maintained, or strengthened), to provide the children with the best developmental opportunities.

A very interesting way of understanding the home-pre-school collaboration is provided in the article by Yngvesson and Garvis (2021), where the child is not only included in terms of developmental indicators, but as a perspective that is equally important as the ones collaborating at the mesosystem level. As this paper is one of the three related to early childhood education, it will be described in more detail in the next section.

Ecological Systems Theory in the Field of Early Childhood Education

The three articles using ecological systems theory in their research on parental involvement in ECE represented different aims and research designs. The first one (Liu et al., 2020) applied Bronfenbrenner's theory as a matrix for a literature review, thus justifying the search for studies on parental involvement/engagement in educational settings for infants and allowing generalisations to be made with the use of other theoretical models. The second report (Kim & Riley, 2021) on an experimental study picked a very specific aspect of child development (early language and literacy) and tested how a particular form of home-based involvement on the part of the parents (dialogical reading) influences this aspect of development. The third one (Yngvesson & Garvis, 2021) assumed the child to be an important actor in the collaboration taking place at the mesosystem level and aimed to explore the three primary perspectives involved in the home-(pre)school collaboration (i.e., child, teachers, and parents), but also articulated the ambition of making the child's voice "visible in the world of adult noise" (p. 1735). By drawing the story constellations and showing the harmonies and disharmonies between the three involved perspectives, the authors show what home-(pre)school collaboration means for the child,

but also give the child – the centre of the theoretical model – a voice. A voice and not a variable identifying a particular developmental change.

The" developing person" is thus not included in terms of particular developmental indicators, but in terms of their own opinions, views, and stories on the home-(pre)school collaboration. The child's stories, being seen in constellations with the parents' and teachers' stories, unmask a huge, rich landscape of adult stories that disharmonise with the child's perspective, which can inform both the practices and policies of the mesosystem. Yngvesson and Garvis's (2021) application of Bronfenbrenner's theory reflectively extends the relationships at the mesosystem by showing that collaborating "about" the child does not need to exclude the child as an important actor.

Conclusion

As shown above, ecological system theory is applied in very different kinds of studies and in a variety of different ways. On the one hand, the theory allows researchers to assume a set of influences (like the home-(pre)school relationships influencing the child), which allows for deeper insight to be obtained into the diverse actors' perspectives (An & Hodge, 2013; Iruka et al., 2020; McBrien, 2011; Yngvesson & Garvis, 2021), or to test and verify new causalities and influences within the theory-defined systems (Hampden-Thompson & Galindo, 2017; Kim & Riley, 2021).

Building on a general framework that defines influences and linkages, such studies adapt Bronfenbrenner's ideas to various local contexts. The adaptation can expand the model (i.e., when considering several macro- and exosystems, as in the study on minority parents by McBrien, 2011), but it can also narrow it (i.e., when operationalising the child's development and parental involvement into very specific skills and activities).

In other words, this theoretical model opens a pathway for other discourses (e.g., cultural, political, or historical) to decide which actors and the collaborations between them will be valued as worthy of inquiry. This means that the theory creates space for research on both the efficiency of established forms of parental involvement and the search for new linkages. While Yngvesson and Garvis (2021) point out the importance of the child as a figure extending the ECEC-parent collaboration into the more-than-parental, Oropilla et al. (2022; Oropilla & Ødegaard, 2021) argues for collaborations with institutions that would establish intergenerational relationships between small children and elderly adults. The model itself does not assign any additional value to any of the potential actors involved in the good life of the child; however, it also does not limit any new linkages that could be created.

Regardless of the fact that collaborations in mesosystems are undefined and open, it is clear that actors from the microsystems shall be involved in them. The family – as it is with its siblings, grandparents, the whole kindship, or just a single parent – shall be fully acknowledged as a first teacher and *part*icipant in creating

environments that facilitate children's well-being and well-becoming. This implies that ecological system theory supports the involvement of more-than-parents, depending on the shape of the microcosmos.

By including time (chronosystem) in the model, Bronfenbrenner (1979) made the model changeable over time. In my view, these changes could embrace tensions to a greater degree rather than interpret them as layers of influence. In a world of increasing complexity, diversity, and speed, embracing spaces that allow for contradicting forces, agonism, and the sharing of diverse voices seems to be of great importance.

Overview over Articles Included in Scoping Literature Review

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Chapter 5
Together, We Can Do More for Our Children

ECEC's Collaboration with Families: An Exploration through the Lens of Social Capital Theory

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Abstract This chapter introduces Coleman and Putnam's social capital theory and discusses its potential for inspiring reflection on the social practice of ECEC's collaboration with children's families. Specifically, the theory promotes reflection on the relationships that develop through a new community of parents and professionals coming together, as well as the new interconnectedness among the parents, which extends the social capital of a particular family and becomes a profitable investment in the child's future. Understanding the concept of social capital allows for the identification of which forms are being blocked, as well as the *bridging* and *bonding* that are not occurring. The empirical case presented in this chapter highlights the role of ECEC's recognition of a family's culture as a bridge to the parental community. The chapter concludes with a discussion of ECEC's role in strengthening the family's network in times where intense migration, mobility, and other factors may impede its growth.

Keywords Bonding · Bridging · Collaboration · Coleman · Putnam · Social capital

Different Understandings of Social Capital

In the preceding chapter, Bourdieu's social theory, specifically his understanding of social capital, was presented. In this chapter, I discuss Coleman's understanding of social capital and show how it is related to the social practice of parental involvement in ECEC.

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As quoted in Chap. 8, Bourdieu defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 21). However, in Bourdieu's work, membership and access to certain profitable networks are connected to a particular social positioning and thus power relations. This is to say that Bourdieu's focus is on how social capital depends on economic and cultural capital, and how it reproduces the capitals. Coleman (1998), however, focuses more on the profits of social capital and less on the social positioning or inclusive/exclusive character of diverse memberships. Accordingly, he highlights the function of social capital and relates it to the notion of a common profit or the common good (rather than to the perpetuation of social inequalities).

As Coleman wrote,

> Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspect of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors – whether persons or corporate actors – within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that, in this absence, would not be possible. (Coleman, 1998, p. 98)

What this shows is that Coleman understood social capital as permanently inherent in relationships between individual and collective social actors, and as facilitating a profitable action. However, "a given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others" (Coleman, 1998, p. 98). In other words, a particular quality of relationships between people becomes social capital only if it is based on a joint benefit, one that none of the participating actors would be able to achieve on its own.

Social Capital as Inherent in Relations

Social capital "exists in the *relations* among persons" (Coleman, 1998, pp. 100–101, emphasis original). As "human capital is created by changes in persons that bring about skills and capabilities that make them able to act in new ways," social capital "comes through changes in the relations among persons that facilitate action" (Coleman, 1998, p. 100). In acknowledging the importance of *how* people come together (to create beneficial actions), Coleman reflected on the diverse social structures that strengthen social capital. He described the benefits of structures with closure, by which he meant a "closed" social structure within a clearly limited number of members who respect the common norms and trust that the other members do as well:

> If A does something for B and trusts B to reciprocate in the future, this establishes an expectation in A and an obligation on the part of B. (Coleman, 1998, p. 102)

Norms, *expectations*, and *trustworthiness* are, according to Coleman, characterising structures with strong social capital. The norms of living in a community that are established through expectations and trust in each other are the factors that safeguard the community's capacity for joint action. When discussing these norms, mutual trust, and expectations, Coleman did not appear to perceive the significance of class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability-related differences, which, according to his critics, shows his theory to be in silent agreement with and thus reproducing established power, loyalty, and discriminatory relations (Edwards et al., 2003, pp. 9–11).

In the process of using social capital theory to reflect on the practice of parental involvement, I will take the risk of stating that Coleman's blindness of class, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, and ability may work as an advantage. The advantage consists of the possibility of focusing on parental collaboration, as ECEC professionals are supposed to do, regardless of any differences. Focusing on social capital allows us to focus on relations between parents and the ECEC, children and parents, and parents and other parents; it also allows us to reflect on the potential implied in these relations for everyone, regardless of the diversity in social positioning and power relations.

Nevertheless, when some relations do not show their capital or work in a beneficial way for the actors involved, the question of the relevance of power, gender, social class, and ethnicity becomes absolutely essential.

(Parents) Bridging and Bonding: Putnam's Perspective

Putnam, another theoretician of social capital, acknowledged the categories of difference (e.g., social class, gender, ethnicity, and disability), but not as posing limits on social capital. Rather, he saw differences as enabling a variety of forms of social capital. He distinguishes between *bridging* and *bonding* types of social capital, whereby *bridging* expands networks by enabling relations across social differences, while *bonding* strengthens cohesion between established and rather homogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000).

Regardless of whether the type is bridging or bonding, social capital functions as a "universal lubricant" of social relations (Putnam, 2000). In relation to parental involvement and collaboration with an ECEC centre, bridging and/or bonding may draw different constellations among parents, as well as between parents and professionals. Hurley (2017) relates bridging to overcoming the power imbalance between ECEC professionals and parents, and bonding to the process of strengthening ties among parents. However, in considering diversity among parents in terms of social class, ethnicity, gender and sexuality, religion, and (dis)ability, the bridging form of capital may also be relevant. Being parents of children in the same ECEC settings may activate bridging connections between social groups that otherwise would never interact. Nevertheless, being parents of children in the same ECEC does not necessarily cancel all the differences and inequalities among parents and allows

them to easily "bridge" to each other. Regardless, being put together in a community of parents may also provoke and strengthen bonding within distinctive parental groups, including those of higher and lower social classes, as well as those with education-related and non-education-related connections. Moreover, parents who are teachers may show a tendency to bond more with teachers than other parents. Bridging and bonding may look differently in each context, as the categories of parents and ECEC professionals are not the only categories of difference that require the "lubricant" of social relations.

Social Capital as a Resource or Ability of the Network

Regardless of the many different ways of enabling social capital, it remains unclear what social capital itself really is. The criticisms of Coleman's conception of social capital relate to the unclarity of the distinction between the *resources* and the *abilities* of the network members. At the moment when individual resources become a group's ability for action, social capital "becomes conceptually fuzzy" (Tzanakis, 2013, p. 5). What may be confusing in Putnam's work is that social capital sometimes relates to networks themselves, and sometimes to their effects, and it is unclear whether the networks themselves are enough to be considered as social capital. Bizzi (2015), however, states that social capital and social networks are two independent but related terms, pointing out that social networks are the basis for social capital, as the latter is enabled by the resources provided by the social networks.

When relating social capital to parental involvement in ECEC, this confusion between *resources* and *abilities* does not seem to matter. From the perspective of ECEC's collaboration with parents, the most important concern is that diverse resources and abilities of all parents can be activated in parental relations with the ECEC and relations among parents, and parental relations with (not only one's own) children. Moreover, enabling new relations and connections of these kinds is seen as value and as capital.

Social Capital as Investment

Bourdieu (1985), Coleman (1998), and Putnam (2000) all underline the beneficial or potentially beneficial character of social capital. The existing or future benefits of certain relations allow us to look at social capital as an investment and a resource with its own economics. Bankston's (2022) description of social relationships as investments that afford access to diverse kinds of goods (that without these relationships are inaccessible) is an example of social capital as investment.

Investing in social capital can be recognised as essential for vulnerable families whose social ties are limited to the underprivileged community, which again affects

their children. When lacking cultural and economic capital, it seems rational to invest in social relationships that may afford access to better jobs and thus economic resources through which one can gain access to diverse cultural goods and experiences. However, following Bourdieu (1985), membership in particular networks already requires particular levels of cultural and or economic capital right at the start. Coleman (1998) identified the importance of *norms* and *trustworthiness* in enabling social capital, access to which depends on knowledge about the norms and the capabilities of obeying them (i.e., a particular type of cultural capital). In Bankston's (2022) view, cultural capital is only one of the dimensions of social capital that is recognised in the norms and values of a society/community/network.

Putnam (2000), however, claims that cultural capital can grow on the basis of networks and their capital. In other words, it is networking that leads to the sharing of knowledge, experiences, and support, and it is not knowledge, experience, and the ability to support that is at stake before entering a network. According to Putnam (2000), it is trust that comes first. Trust enables horizontal linking between people and their civic engagement, which may develop into grassroots organisations following the redistribution of other resources. Putnam associates trust with civic engagement and Coleman with the common good. However, the benefits of social capital and redistributed resources do not always function for the good of society or democracy, as there are networks with practices that openly conflict with social welfare, such as those affiliated with corruption or mafia groups that exemplify strong social capital.

Social Capital in/of/Through Parental Involvement

Adler and Kwon (2002) have shown that educational institutions, by connecting families with each other and a larger community than themselves, contribute to the creation of social capital. ECEC's collaboration and partnership with parents and caregivers is a relationship that comprises the resources and abilities of all involved, and that may be beneficial for both the more vulnerable and the better-situated families, as well as all the children. However, depending on the ECEC tradition in a particular country/culture/context, the goal of "joining forces" may be different. The desired effect of relationships between one's home and the ECEC will be different in cultures/countries/contexts that practice pre-school traditions, as opposed to others where the social pedagogy tradition dominates (Bennet, 2010). While in the former tradition, the school readiness of each child will be at stake, in the latter, the focus will be directed toward the community's efforts to safeguard all children's well-being in their relationships with each other and the community.

Parent-Teacher Partnerships as Social Capital

Connecting parents and teachers creates a new community within which there are mutual obligations, expectations, different types of communication, and rules. On the one hand, the norms are inspired by the steering documents (e.g., curricula, framework plans, etc.). On the other hand, the norms may be influenced by those of the other communities in which the parents participate.

This means that an ECEC parents' community is a community joining people whose daily family and professional lives take place in different social circles, each of which may have distinctive norms. It is thus likely that the norms and rules of the other social circles of parents and professionals will affect the relationship between parents and teachers. In other words, different parents could have different perspectives on the child, different values and beliefs about the child's upbringing, and different ways of interacting with others. Parcel and Bixby (2016) emphasise the social capital contained in the connections of different values and norms of heterogeneous communities emerging at educational institutions. However, they also underline the importance of teachers understanding the different ways of raising children and remaining able to react if they observe any abuse of formal regulations of care and upbringing.

The social circles and networks coming together in the new community of parents and professionals in an ECEC setting are related to the social capital index developed by Onyx and Bullen (2000). The factors of this social capital index are emphasised with *italics* in the text below. Both parents and teachers are *participating in a local community* within and possibly also outside of the ECEC settings. By engaging in or organising various activities, they show certain levels of *agency*. Connections and relationships between the ECEC and the parents and among the parents are (ideally) founded in *feelings of trust and safety*, and in case these feelings are not there yet, it is the ECEC's role to gain the parents' trust and ensure their safety. It is possible that bonding between parents forms *informal neighbourhood connections* and *friends' connections*. It is also possible that good neighbours may become members of the parental community in the same ECEC setting. As families and professionals may have different values and norms, respect and appreciation of diversity are prerequisites for establishing mutual relationships. Finally, both parents and teachers should *feel valued* by the newly established community. All these social capital indicators, which it may be possible to detect in parents collaborating with/through an ECEC setting, show the interconnectedness of both parents and teachers that enhances social capital and further enriches communities (Purola & Kuusisto, 2021).

Parental Involvement: Strengthening the Family's Social Capital

For many families, early childhood and pre-school education institutions are their first step into a new institutional world and its communities. Entering the new social/institutional arenas may confirm their already-acquired norms of interaction, but it may also demand adjustments and adaptations to the norms of the newly formed community. In Putnam's (2000) view, becoming parents of children attending the same ECEC creates a level of trust that enables new connections and interactions of a bridging and bonding character that truly enrich the social capital of the families involved.

In modern society, with the dominant model of nuclear families, children's social networks are increasingly narrow. A decrease in the number of family members, together with a weaker connection with the older generations due to separation because of migration or economic factors, significantly limit the networks in which children live and become (Ribbens McCarthy & Edwards, 2011). Moreover, this phenomenon sheds light on the critical aspects of care-taking, upbringing, and socialisation in the nuclear family. In such a situation, the child's participation in an ECEC becomes the entire family's link to new connections, new relations, and a supportive network. Particularly, parents in analogical situations may easily become the new "extended family"; however, such support may also come from the teachers/ECEC staff.

The families extending their networks through the child's participation in ECEC can be described in terms of *bridging*, which entails extending their own social relations (Putnam, 2000), or in terms of a fusion of social networks (Coleman, 1998). Coleman describes the social network of children and their parents as predictable in educational institutions. The children within an ECEC institution create relations with other children, previously unknown, while remaining in relations with their own parents, who have also had the opportunity to interact in/through the educational institutions. Such an inevitable model of relations, limited to a particular member of a community (ECEC or school), is what Coleman calls a social structure "with closure" (Coleman, 1998). Such "closed" kinds of networks create a possibility for developing norms, which again strengthen the expectations, trustworthiness, and thus social capital. In the case of such a network of parents and children knowing each other, the parents have an opportunity to communicate about the norms of their children's interactions, behaviour, and activities. For example, they may discuss how much screen/gaming time would be allowed during one child's visit to the other. Such a norm will impose expectations towards each other and thus trustworthiness, as well as social control (Tzanakis, 2013).

Social Capital or Disturbing Interference?

Coleman (1998) states that one's engagement in social interactions, relationships, and networks lasts as long as all involved profit from these relations. In the case of parental involvement, one might ask how the parents and ECEC perceive the benefits of belonging to networks enabled by the ECEC setting.

Some countries/communities/cultural contexts do not recognise the benefits of the teachers' and families' influences on each other and impose strictly separate roles of professionals responsible for education and parents responsible for upbringing. The approach of non-interference may, however, relate to only one of the parts, such as a professional's attitude of non-interference in family functioning, or the family's attitude of non-interference in professional functioning (Blândul, 2012; Kultti & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2016).

Prior and Gerard (2007) give an example of cooperation being practised in the form of communicating educational intentions, while the parental say at school may be seen as an interference or disturbance. Such cooperation might be seen by the parents as beneficial in terms of allowing access to the (pre)school's perspective and intentions, but they may feel unrecognised as the first educators of their children, as in such a case, they may be seen as representing insufficient knowledge and skills.

Apart from the views on (non)interference, there is a great diversity of options for how cooperation should be practised in accordance with different policies. While educational policies may emphasise the importance of cooperation between families and (pre)schools, it is the autonomy of the (pre)school that becomes a key factor in how the relationship with the families is established and maintained (Granata et al., 2016) and what opportunities for networking the parents are exposed to. An interesting example of different implementations of the same policies comes from Norway. The Norwegian Framework Plan for Kindergarten (UDIR, 2017) states that "the kindergarten must seek to prevent the child from experiencing conflicts of loyalty between home and kindergarten" (p. 29). Two parents whom I contacted through a research project with the co-author of this book told me about their experiences with ECECs introducing the no-cake and no-sugar rule for birthday celebrations. As the Framework Plan obligates them to introduce the children to healthy lifestyles and good nutrition, they thought that birthday celebrations needed to change. However, the ECECs chose very different ways of involving the parents in the process.

The first parent talked about the ECEC organising an extraordinary parental meeting, where the ECEC staff presented the number of cakes being eaten every month/year and the excessive sugar intake this had caused. The ECEC invited the parents to participate in a discussion on healthier ways of marking and celebrating birthdays. Parental discussions helped generate different ideas, which all the parents voted for/against. In such a way, "a fruit plate and group dance" became the kindergarten's way of celebrating birthdays. When summing up the parental work, the headmaster asked the parents to communicate the result of the parental meeting to the children, so that they knew that all of the parents were involved in the co-creation of a "happy/healthy birthday to you" project.

The second parent told us about receiving a letter informing us that "no one will be allowed to bring birthday cakes for birthday celebrations of the child, as the kindergarten has implemented a no-sugar policy." The decision was justified by a relevant quote from the Framework Plan and a discussion with one parental representative. At the end of the letter, the parents were left with the following: "Please do not talk negatively about our decision to your child, as it may develop a loyalty conflict between the child's home and the kindergarten" (Letter, Parent 2).

These two stories illustrate how differently the same policies of the Framework Plan (promoting healthy nutrition and preventing loyalty conflicts) were implemented in different institutional settings of an ECEC. The first implementation allowed for active parental participation in developing ideas, and the second put the parents in the role of passive receivers of the ECEC's decisions, with an additional ban of any criticism. It is questionable whether the "collaboration" as presented in the second case may generate any form of social capital. If so, this would only emerge in the form of parents bonding together against the kindergarten's decision.

Democracy Deficit

Seeing parental influence as an interference or disturbance may be related to the democracy deficit described by Van Laere et al. (2018), where "the goals and modalities of parental involvement are defined without the involvement of parents themselves" (p. 189). When relating this democracy deficit to the social capital concept, Keyes's (2002) work discussing the goals for ECEC collaboration with parents is especially enlightening. Social capital activates groups to work together to achieve a common aim or good (Coleman, 1998). However, in terms of ECEC's collaboration with parents, the aim is not necessarily a result of communication between the ECEC and families, but rather decided in advance of parents entering the institution. The imposed aim forces the norms and expectations onto the parents and shows only those who fit and identify with the aim to be trustworthy. Even though many middle-class parents fit the expectations and comply with the imposed goal, many families of other backgrounds remain unrecognised as valuable resources for the child, the ECEC, and other parents.

Social Capital Enabled by Recognising Family Culture as a Resource

The diversity of modern societies is reflected in the diversity of the cultural identities of children and families attending ECECs, and this allows us to understand ECEC settings as arenas for social inclusion (Sadownik, 2020; Višnjić-Jevtić et al., 2021) and thus social sustainability (Sadownik et al., 2022; Višnjić Jevtić &

Visković, 2020). The inclusion emerges ideally through bridging the children and families who, without the ECEC setting, would never meet each other and have an opportunity to *bond.* In the bridging-bonding relation between the ECEC and a family, it is also important to establish joint understanding and continuity of educational activities and values (Višnjić-Jevtić, 2021). This requires that the family is seen as an important resource in the child's life, and also as the ECEC's *social capital* in allowing the professionals to access other knowledge and perspectives on the child. Being seen as *social capital*, parents gain a new role—the role of respected partners in education—which affects both their confidence and competence as parents (Shartrand et al., 1997; De Bruïne et al., 2014). Their personal experience "bridges" (Hurley, 2017) their family to the ECEC institutions, where it becomes a resource that bonds the ECEC and the parents.

However, as mentioned earlier in this chapter, the family's capital may not always bridge into ECEC contexts, and not all parents must necessarily bond together. The bridging and bonding may relate to only some of the parents and exclude others. In the case study below, I illustrate such an inclusive/exclusive work of *bridging* and *bonding* in the context of Croatia.

Empirical Case

Croatia is a country where the majority of the population is Croats (91.63%); the rest of the population consists of nationalities represented in much smaller numbers. Serbs make up 3.20% of the population, Bosnians 0.60%, and Roma 0.46%, while others are represented by less than 0.40% (CBS, 2022). Although a total of 22 national minorities live in Croatia, they are often not recognised or highlighted in ECEC settings. An exception is the case of ECEC settings that work in the language and script of national minorities (e.g., ECEC for Hungarian, Czech, or Italian national minorities following the educational policies of each respective country). However, what often happens is that there is a strong recognition and celebration of families coming from very distant cultures and countries. These cultures seem to be recognised and acknowledged as potentially valuable and resourceful co-creators of the ECEC's pedagogical offerings. The story of Arthur, described below, exemplifies this kind of unequal distribution of appreciation and ignorance of the family's background.

Arthur is 5 years old. He comes from a multicultural environment (i.e., his mother and father come from different continents and are of different ethnicities and native languages) and is enrolled in an ECEC setting in Croatia. The ECEC does not speak any of the languages in which the family communicates, which is why communication with the parents takes place in English. In fact, communication with the child takes place in a combination of Croatian and English. The teachers make an extra effort to ensure that the whole family feels welcome, so they adjust the

communication forms to the family's needs. The boy quickly learns the Croatian language. Despite the initial difficulties in communicating, the boy has been included by the peer group and invited to play since day one. As time passes, the children start becoming curious about the languages Arthur's parents speak and the countries they come from.

Seeing that the children's group is interested in knowing more about Arthur's family's culture, the teachers encourage more intensive cooperation with Arthur's parents, especially his mother. The mother is open to spending one whole day in the ECEC setting. That day is a holy day of celebration in the country that she is from. The celebration requires some preparation of materials and activities, with which the teachers actively help. The day is a great success, with all the children and teachers getting involved in new activities. Arthur feels that his home culture is recognised and respected by the ECEC, which leads to further involvement of the mother in organising more activities connected to songs, games, traditional food, spices, and customs connected to birthday celebrations.

The positive effects of these intercultural activities are communicated to other parents. During parental meetings, the teachers create groups so that Arthur's parents can join others who can and want to communicate in English, and this allows Arthur's parents to feel included. The parents express appreciation for the intercultural resources that are made accessible for their children during the days when Arthur's mother became involved in the ECEC. After 4 months, Arthur's parents become a "natural" part of the parental community and are increasingly connected with other families. The families of other children become their extended family. They help each other with picking up the children, "baby-sitting," and other things that a family with children may need.

The ECEC staff is aware that such smooth inclusion happened thanks to their first efforts in making the bridging possible. Creating an environment of joint understanding where Arthur's family was perceived as a great resource for the ECEC, and by adjusting the communication forms and languages so that their active participation was possible, the ECEC overcame the obstacles that potentially could have stopped the bridging. Providing arenas in which all the parents and children could get to know Arthur and his multicultural home environment gave all the families an opportunity for bonding, which was extended through the help they continued to provide for each other.

What is interesting in this case is the reason the teachers decided to provide Arthur's family with support during the bridging and bonding with the parental community. In my view, the teachers had a genuine recognition of the family's cultural capital as a resource for Arthur, the other children, and the entire ECEC community. This may seem surprising, particularly if one knows that this ECEC is attended by other children of minority backgrounds whose cultural capital is not recognised as a resource and whose culture is not accounted for in the pedagogical content, and the parents are left alone in paving their way to inclusion in the parental community. For some reason, Arthur's multicultural background was attractive enough to be celebrated, while the others were not. This therefore raises the question of which powers decide on the kind of family culture that should be recognised

as a resource and thus enable social capital, and which families are denied such recognition and thus must struggle with bridging into the parental community. Is it the "attractiveness" of the culture that is chosen to be celebrated? Are there personal rather than professional values steering such decisions, or is it perhaps the effect of wider social processes, such as the assimilation of some groups? As the ECEC setting is a part of a wider society and its traditions, one of which may be connected to the long-term assimilation of particular minorities, the promotion of some cultural backgrounds may thus be unthinkable and unimaginable for the ECEC staff.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I presented the theorisations of social capital developed by Coleman and Putnam as possible ways of reflecting on ECEC's collaboration with diverse parents and families. By discussing the different ways of interpreting the value of extending a family's network, this theoretical toolkit also allows us to reflect on the grouping and bonding that may have an exclusionary or negative effect. The main conclusion of this chapter, supported by the empirical case, is that it is in the ECEC's power to enable different parents' bridging into the parental community, and thus facilitate stronger bonding with particular families. In times of migration, mobility, and diversity, in which many families may lack good, supportive networks, the conscious work of how an ECEC to interconnect these families is of great importance.

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Chapter 6
Models of Family-School Partnership: Who Is in Power When We Care for the Children We Share?

Adrijana Višnjić Jevtić (ID)

Abstract In this chapter, three models that try to explain the collaborative relations between parents and ECEC teachers are analysed. McAllister Swap models discuss interactions between parents and professionals based on beliefs, expectations, and involvement strategies. Epstein's Six Types of Parental Involvement are considered through the prism of involvement as a potentially passive position. It is questioned whether in this model the parents are involved by someone, or they have the option of choosing to participate, or not. Hornby's model of parental participation is considered in relation to parental strengths and parental contribution. Parents are approached as separate individuals who have the option of choosing (not)participating. Given that both models see parents as part of governing bodies, the chapter provides an account of the involvement/participation of parents as decision-makers in ECEC in different countries.

Keywords Epstein · Hornby · Cooperation · Parents · Partnership

Introduction

Early childhood education settings represent communities where children from different family cultures and different stimulating environments are gathered. With an individual approach to each child, and indirectly to each family, teachers and other educational professionals should meet the different needs of each individual child and create a stimulating environment for each of them. A stimulating environment in an early childhood education setting is adapted to the different needs and interests of different children who come from diverse backgrounds as opposed to the family environment where everything is focused on one or several children.

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Early childhood education settings should be seen as complementary to a family's care and education. This presupposes respect for family diversity, respect for family culture and understanding of different educational values. The responsibility for the care and education of the child is divided between the family and early childhood education setting. As the child is under the daily influence of the family and early childhood education setting, the issue of ensuring continuity in educational activity arises. Achieving this continuity requires cooperation between families and settings. Therefore, cooperation is imposed as an imperative for both parents and teachers. Various programs of early childhood education emphasized the role of partnership with parents (i.e. Steiner education, the Reggio Emilia approach, Te Whāriki). The roles of parents differ from the roles of those who create educational policies and those who are the founders of educational institutions. Given the age of children attending early childhood education settings, family-school cooperation is imperative as young children are almost entirely dependent on family support and cannot take responsibility for their (children's) own education.

The rise of ideas of cooperation consequently forced the development of different models of family-school cooperation. Models of cooperation between teachers and parents represent strategies developed from scientific theories. Joyce et al. (2008) define models as a series of procedures or activities whose purpose is to achieve a given goal. Different approaches to families result in different models of collaboration between family and educational institution. Models are mainly founded on respect for the individual perspectives of all participants involved in collaborative relationships. In this chapter I will try to explain the (possible) blind spots of three, similar yet opposite models – Susan McAllister Swap's *Conceptual framework of home-school interactions* (McAllister Swap, 1993), Joyce Epstein's *Six Types of Parental Involvement* (Epstein, 1990, 2001) and *Hornby's Model of Parental Involvement* (1989, 2000).

Conceptual Framework of Home-School Interactions

McAllister Swap (1993) describes four models for the development of the relationship between parents and professionals:

1. Protective model
2. Transmission model
3. Model of curriculum enrichment
4. Partnership model

These models are based on conscious and unconscious beliefs, expectations, and strategies within interactions between parents and professionals.

The McAllister Swap (1993) protective model describes the power relationship between families and institutions. The goal pursued in this model is the prevention of conflict between parents and professionals. Parents are expected to transfer the responsibility for their children's education to the educational institution and take

on the position of non-interference in educational goals. It is understandable that the protective model is a separation model in which each participant is responsible for his own aspect of action. The consequence of such a relationship is the discontinuity of educational efforts towards the child. If to examine this form of relationship in light of the well-being of all participants involved, as the goal of cooperation, it does not lead to the achievement of a common goal. It is possible that the lack of communication between parents and educators resulted in the absence of a perception of the existence of a common goal.

It is well known that family environment is important for a child's overall development. As a result, educational institutions took on the role of a corrective to family education, which is considered deficient and therefore, requires correction. The institution imposes itself as an educational authority on parents due to parental ignorance and, consequently, the need for teaching. According to McAllister Swap (1993), this approach is visible in the transmission model. Although it includes parents, this model is based on respect for educational goals prescribed by educational institutions. Parents are considered incompetent; therefore, they need to be educated in order to promote the values represented by the educational institution. Maleš (2015) states that this approach does not respect the differences between families, but that the relationship goes in the direction of equal expectations towards all parents. This model emphasizes the need for communication between teachers and parents; however, the communication itself is one-way, i.e. from teachers to parents. Furthermore, although this model assumed contacts between the family and the institution, it is still not a collaboration.

The paradigm of cooperation, which has been present in the relations between parents and educators since the 1980s, is based on a relationship of partnership, cooperation and respect. The paradigm is grounded in the thesis that children are the responsibility of both parents and society, and that educational institutions should support and help parents in their parenting efforts. The approach is based on respect, appreciation, and acceptance of parents (Wilson, 2016). The relationship acknowledges an individual approach to each family, respect for different educational efforts and different cultures (family and institutional). The contribution of all participants to this relationship is visible in the quality of communication, clearly defined expectations, and mutual support. Two models proposed by McAllister Swap (1993) respond to described interactions: the curriculum enrichment model and the partnership model. With the curriculum enrichment model, emphasis is placed on the cooperation of parents and professionals to improve the goals and content of the curriculum – there is respect and equality among all participants in the process. The partnership model relies almost entirely on Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory according to which different communities directly or indirectly affect the child, so their interaction is important. Although, just like in the curriculum enrichment model, emphasis in this model is on mutual appreciation, respect, and support, it differs in the expansion of partner culture in all communities that surround the child (McAllister Swap, 1993). In this way, a new culture is built that unites the family, peer, and social culture in which the child grows up.

Six Types of Parental Involvement

Epstein (1990, 2001) contributed to the determination of parental involvement in children's education. Her typology of parental involvement provides a theoretical framework for much research in this area. According to Epstein (1990, 2001), parents can be involved in six areas:

- Type 1: Parenting
- Type 2: Communication
- Type 3: Volunteering
- Type 4: Support for children's learning at home
- Type 5: Decision-making
- Type 6: Cooperation with the community

At first glance, parenting has little to do with the relationship between parents and settings, given that it is a relationship between parents or guardians with one or more children (Ribbens McCarthy & Edwards, 2011) where intentional activities are used in order to care for and encourage the child. By providing a stimulating environment, parents influence the child's well-being, which indirectly affects the child's functioning in early childhood education settings (further in text ECE). However, from Epstein's perspective, parenting as involvement refers to the characteristics of parents. So, it is about the kind of involvement that is present in most parents by the very fact that they are parents. Knowledge about the importance of quality parenting is not explicitly described. Nevertheless, teachers can contribute to parenting by strengthening parental competences.

Along with Epstein, other studies (Hornby, 2011; Bleach, 2015) highlight two-way communication as the most important characteristic of cooperation between parents and teachers. Two-way communication is important because both, parents and teachers, have information that is important to share with each other in order to reach the set goals in relation to the child, the parents, and the teachers. Parental information is usually related to the context in which the child is growing up. Having insight into the family context gives teachers the opportunity to get closer to the child and understand the child's behaviour. Lack of parental information influences teachers' perceptions of children functioning in a different social environment, and therefore, teachers base their perceptions on their own experiences. Parents also have little or no insight into children's functioning in communities which differ from their own family. Complete information about a child's development can help parents better understand the child's behaviour in new situations. The teacher has the obligation to inform parents about the developmental characteristics of the child with special emphasis on the socialization process, possible deviations in development – positive or negative, the goals for the child's development and the ways to encourage the child to reach them. Fritzell Hanhan (2008) problematizes the concept of two-way communication because he states that, despite the appearance of two-way communication, communication is most often one-way, i.e. teachers communicate with parents in different ways, but it usually looks as if educators describe

activities, talk about educational policy of the institution, children's progress, the curriculum. The content of communication is focused on the instructions intended for the parent (Amatea, 2013). Therefore, communication between teachers and parents is usually one-way and led by the teachers.

Volunteering is one of the ways parents can directly get involved in the work of ECE settings. However, there is a culturally different understanding of what parents can do in ECE settings. Considering that these are additional responsibilities for parents, the question is whether all parents can be equally involved in them. Bower and Griffin (2011) point out that volunteering presupposes an investment of time and money, so it is questionable how this type of involvement affects parents who cannot afford it. Despite this, Epstein et al. (2009) state that it is still one of the key activities for assessing the quality of parental involvement. Volunteering can be manifested as staying in educational groups and participating in educational work (by presenting one's occupation or family/cultural customs). Parents who are involved in such activities are often well educated, of higher socio-economic status, and, most often, members of the majority population (Freeman, 2010). Consequently, inclusion through this form becomes exclusive to only one group of parents.

Support for children's learning at home may be considered as more appropriate for the context of primary and secondary education and there are numerous examples of inclusion activities in this area. In ECE settings, support for learning is in activities that include all stakeholders of the collaborative relationship (children, parents, and educators). Parents can participate in setting and achieving educational goals and learning strategies by designing and organizing curriculum activities (Keyser, 2006). The area of creating a multicultural curriculum and the area of special knowledge and skills are the areas where parents can contribute the most. Lines et al. (2011) point out that in the field of learning about culture, parents contribute their own values, customs, traditions, rituals, and expectations. Preston et al. (2018) discussed it as *family vibrancy* and they see this attribute as a fund of knowledge. Hornby and Lafaele (2011) find that parents whose first language is different from the language of instruction do not feel comfortable in helping their children in learning. Support for children's learning at home in early childhood can be associated with providing a stimulating environment in which the child develops positive attitudes towards knowledge and learning and has the opportunity to learn and to develop. Given that the same tasks constitute quality parenting, it is possible to conclude that child support and quality parenting are intertwined and connected. Bleach (2015) clarifies that it is necessary to separate parental involvement in the upbringing and education of one's own child from involvement in the work of early childhood education settings. This emphasizes the multiplicity of parental roles: the creation of a home/family curriculum that consists of encouraging the child's cognitive, social, and cultural development, transferring values, and shaping children's attitudes towards education. By acting on shaping values and, especially, attitudes towards education, parents shape the social community and educational institutions. In this way, they influence educators, who in turn influence society through their actions.

Decision-making by parents and teachers can take place within educational groups or at the institution level. Group-level decision-making most often refers to

participation in curriculum creation, socializing, and celebrations (Shen et al., 2014). Examples of joint decision-making at the level of institutions can be seen in the participation of parents in the management of educational institutions (Anderson & Minke, 2007; Višnjić Jevtić, 2018). Parents can participate in the work of schools through parents' councils, class councils, and governing bodies of educational institutions. Unlike schools, ECE settings do not have the obligation to establish parent councils, therefore, at the level of educational institutions, parents can only participate in the work of administrative councils. Certain European countries are working on programs to strengthen parental involvement in such activities (Spajić-Vrkaš, 2014). Despite legal provisions on parental participation in decision-making, the European document Citizenship Education in Europe (2012) shows that parents have no influence on actual decision-making. This kind of parental participation can be problematic from the aspect of the opportunity to participate in decision-making. Given that only few parents participate in the governing bodies of educational institutions, the question is whether the decisions represented by the selected parents are truly in the interest of most parents. Investigating parental perception of participation in decision-making in schools, authors Pahić et al. (2010) concluded that there is a difference in the perception of influence on decision-making between parents who participate in governing bodies and those who do not. These results confirm the ambivalence of one parent deciding on behalf of the group. Unlike parents in schools, parents in settings have fewer opportunities to participate in decision-making (Visković & Višnjić Jevtić, 2017). Despite this, it is possible that, due to more frequent (almost daily) interactions between parents and teachers, parents still have the opportunity to participate in group-related decision-making.

Cooperation with the community may be seen through the prism of parents' social capital. Parents do not have the same position within networks and therefore they have different social practices (Calabrese Barton et al., 2004). Like other cooperation relationships, it is possible that parents who represent a minority group in the community have fewer opportunities to cooperate and be active in it. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that families at risk of social exclusion cannot contribute to this area of involvement.

Epstein's typology provides an overview of the different ways in which parents can contribute to children's learning and development. This way of inclusion can be problematic from the aspect of parental passiveness in taking real initiative and responsibility, because all the mentioned activities were organized by teachers for parents. Although one of the activities is the involvement of parents in children's learning at home and assumes parental initiative, this type of activity is also led by teachers. Teachers have expectations from parents about the tasks that parents should perform, and in this way, they organize the way in which parents will encourage children's learning (Weiss et al., 2013).

The Joyce Epstein model is based on cooperation as a means of achieving educational goals, therefore it is more appropriate to the context of school education than to an early childhood education institution. Although this model is also applied in the context of early childhood education, it is possible that it applies to differences

in the curricula intended for children of early and preschool age, i.e. it is possible that it is a question of focusing on academic achievements from an early age.

Although the very idea of involving parents represents an inclusive practice, it very often ignores the real differences between parents (Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). The expectations of teachers and educational institutions that parents will feel good in the activities that are organized *for them* represent an unequal distribution of power in which there is no real cooperation. Instead of partnership or cooperative relations, we have a hierarchy in which educational institutions *involve* parents, which implies the passiveness of parents and the absence of real engagement and participation (Goodall & Montgomery, 2014). Therefore, involvement means dominance of the educational institution, therefore it does not represent a relationship of equal participants.

Hornby's Model of Parental Participation

Hornby's model of parental participation represents a paradigmatic shift in collaborative relations between parents and teachers. Appreciating the importance of the relationship between educators and parents, Hornby (1989) places the parent – his needs and his strengths – in the centre of interest. Given that parents are the child's primary educators, it is assumed that they have knowledge that can help teachers understand the child's current developmental status as well as its interests and capabilities. Hornby (1989, 2000) defines parental experience as parental strengths (see Fig. 6.1). He states that parents have information and therefore, they can provide
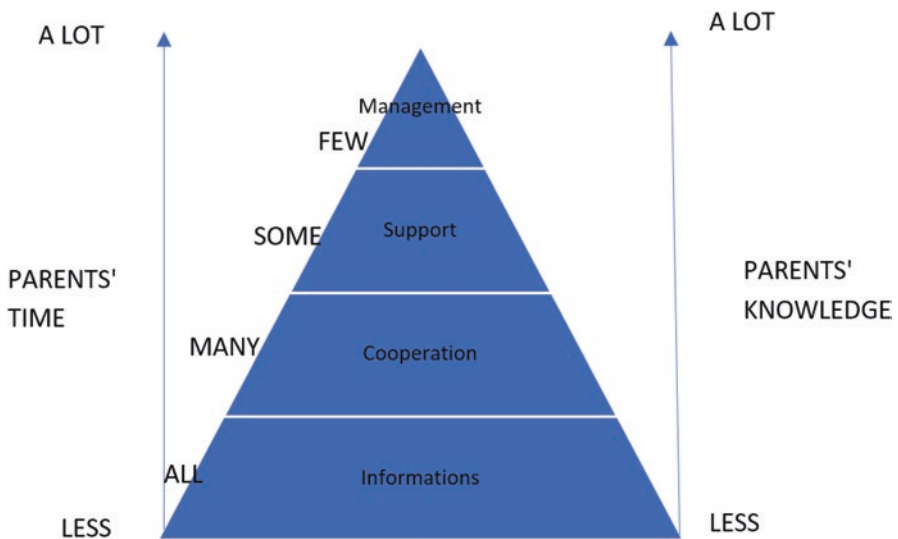

Fig. 6.1 Model of parental strengths/contribution. (Source: Horbny, 1989, p. 161)

support to teachers. The prerequisites for support are teachers' appreciation and respect towards parents and vice versa. Even though this is a model based on reciprocity, mutual respect and sharing of responsibilities, Hornby (2011) emphasizes the responsibility of educators for establishing a collaborative relationship between parents and educators. Responsibility is based on the professional competence of the educator.

Discussing parental needs, as visualized in Fig. 6.2, Hornby (1989, 2000) points out that parents need clear and open communication, regular contacts, pedagogical education, and parenting support. It is assumed that teachers have the competence to provide parents with this type of support, that is, to recognize the different needs of different parents.

Hornby's model of parental participation (2000, 2011) presumes that all parents need information, most parents need a connection with the institution, some of them need education, and only a few of them need support. The time and expertise of teachers are factors related to the needs of parents. Teachers need more knowledge and time for the needs of a smaller number of parents, that is, they need less time and knowledge for the needs of a larger number of parents. In addition to parental needs, Hornby (2000, 2011) also considers the possible contribution of parents. Thus, he points out that all parents can provide information about the child, most can cooperate with educators, and many can collect funds for the institution. Only some of the parents are ready to get involved in the management of the institution. The time and knowledge required for parents' participation also depend on the form.
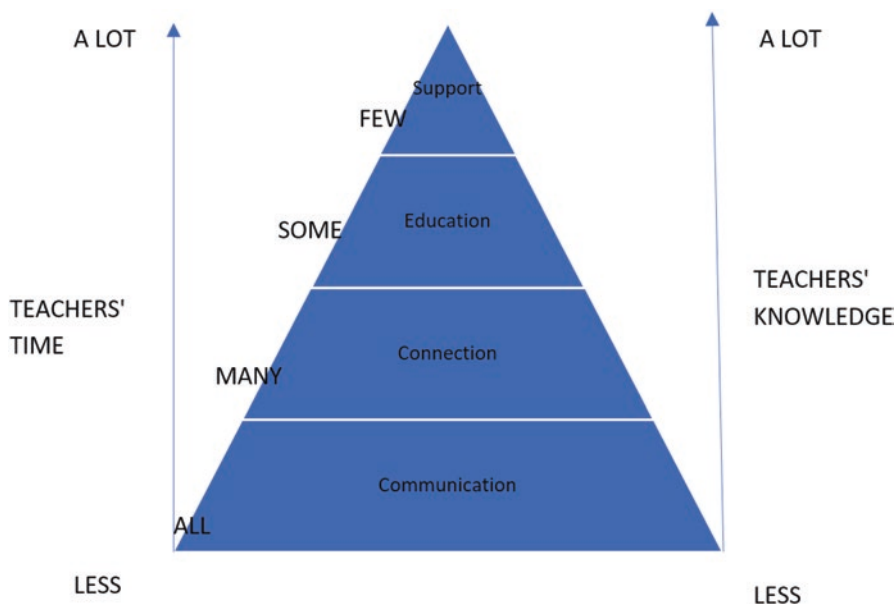

Fig. 6.2 Model of parental needs. (Source: Hornby, 1989, p. 161)

Communication skills are a prerequisite for achieving reciprocal relationships. Dialogue and active listening help to understand expectations, which contributes to the appreciation and understanding of participants in a collaborative relationship (Kultti & Pramling-Samuelsson, 2016). Unverbalized expectations and assessments are barriers that lead to misunderstanding or misinterpretation of given information. Without clear and open communication, both parents and teachers may misunderstand the behaviour of others and perceive them as a lack of interest and/or desire for cooperation, i.e. give up cooperation. In this way, the difficulty or absence of communication leads to challenges in their cooperation.

Mutual support of parents and teachers is a prerequisite for successful cooperation. However, most often this support is one-way, i.e. support provided to parents by teachers. Teachers provide support to parents in strengthening their parental competence, holding educational workshops and lectures, and supporting parental involvement in the work of the educational institution (Višnjić Jevtić, 2018). McAllister Swap (1993) points out that there are roles in which parents can support educational professionals. In that respect, parents can be an audience at events in an educational institution, helpers in activities, representatives of the best interests of children, decision-makers and problem solvers (if they are involved committees that operate at educational institutions and within the social community). Hornby (2000) sees parents as receivers of information, management, helpers, donors, (co)experts, clients, and consultants. The highlighted roles may be seen as parents' contribution in the support of teachers. Support does not only refer to material (helpers, donors, clients) but also to professional help. By recognizing and respecting parental competences, not only in the field of parenting but also in the areas of their professional domain, we give parents the space to take on the roles of (co)experts and consultants and expand the area in which they can provide support to teachers. Comparing the roles described by McAllister Swap (1993) and Hornby (2000), it is evident that they almost entirely overlap. Exceptions are the roles of parents as (experts) and consultants (Hornby, 2000). Although McAllister Swap (1993) did not specifically emphasize the roles of (co)experts and consultants, it is possible to recognize them in the roles of helpers and representatives.

In discussing support for parents, some authors (i.e. Leithwood, 2009; Morgan, 2017; Sandberg & Vuorinen, 2008) focus on the empowerment of parents. Sandberg and Vuorinen (2008) see support for parents as empowering parents to take responsibility in situations where parental and child interests are confronted. In the long run, empowering parents contributes to better parenting, which ultimately has positive outcomes for child development. In this interaction, teachers and parents find models of mutual sharing of knowledge and skills, influence the learning environment and improve the involvement of parents and teachers in the child's learning and development. The quality of the parent-teacher relationship depends on the frequency and type of contacts. Research (Weiss et al., 2006) showed that parents who more frequently participated in activities in educational groups, regularly communicated with teachers and, consequently, developed better relationships. It can be assumed that parents' tendency to participate contributed to the quality of relationship. The frequency of the participation was in correlation with parents' social skills,

i.e. those parents who easily establish new relationships participated more frequently in the life of ECE settings. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to conclude that quality relationships would develop with all parents if they participated more often in ECE settings. It is possible that parents who have obstacles in achieving communication and establishing relationships consciously avoid these situations. Therefore, they do not even have the opportunity to participate in these forms of activities. Equally, parents who have objective obstacles, such as language issues, are not able to participate in the activities where language knowledge is needed. According to Hornby's model, teachers can find the kind of activity that will enable equal participation of all parents, but in different ways and in different activities.

Hornby's model of parental participation (2000, 2011) is a model that gives both teachers and parents the right to choose the forms of participation and contribution to mutual relations. This model respects the diversity of family cultures and parents' personalities and departs from the traditional model in which all activities are intended for all parents, while experts place them in a passive role. This model sees parents as equal, active partners of educational professionals who may need support, but can also provide it.

How Do We Involve Parents and How Do They Participate in Making Decisions About ECE Settings? Cases from Brazil, Croatia, France, and Spain

Cooperation between the family and the educational institution assumes a process based on mutual communication, support, sharing of responsibilities and joint activities to achieve the optimal development of the child (Višnjić Jevtić, 2018). Of all the characteristics of a collaborative relationship, it is easiest to approach the analysis of the activities carried out within the framework of that relationship. Although it is possible (and necessary) to analyse all aspects of the two previously described models (Six Types of Parental Involvement and Hornby's Model of Parental Involvement), examples of parental involvement/participation in decision-making in educational institutions in four countries – Brazil, Croatia, France and Spain – will be presented. These examples will be presented because participation in decision-making are activities that enable a proactive parental role. Also, I am talking about activities that are the least determined by the influence of teachers.

Brazil

The existence of the School Councils is protected by the Law of Guidelines and Bases of National Education of Brazil, created in 1996. The Council is the highest decision-making body within the school and has consultative, fiscal, and mobilizing functions. All the decisions are taken collectively. It promotes a democratic

participation of all groups involved within the school organization, including parents and teachers. The definition of its members depends on the organization for election and should be chaired by the school principal. The Council can have between 20 and 40 members Each school has a statute that defines all the determinations of the School Council, however, some points are not negotiable, such as the participation of all groups (teachers, education specialists, employees, parents, and students). The responsibilities of the Council are to ensure the maintenance of the school and monitor the actions of school leaders to guarantee the quality of education. The counsellors must monitor the application of resources destined for the school and discuss the pedagogical project with the director and teachers.

Croatia

The Administrative Council is the body that manages ECE settings in the Republic of Croatia. It consists of five to seven members, and one of the members is a parent representative. The Administrative Council has a wide range of powers – it decides on the employment of workers, referral to a medical examination in case of reduced working capacity, and termination of employment. The Administrative Council adopts the annual plan and curriculum of the kindergarten, decides on the enrolment of children in the institution and decides on the economic operations of ECE settings.

A parent who is a member of the Administrative Council is elected at a joint parents' meeting and is most often a parent whom the teachers (!) think would do well in that task, so the teachers motivate other parents or that parent, to put forward a candidacy. Given that ECE settings can have up to 600 children, this means that the parent representative is chosen from at least 600 parents. Of course, it is not possible for all parents to attend the election, so it is questionable how representative the selected representative truly is of all parents. Also, it is questionable whether he shares the information needed to vote on decisions at the sessions and whether he then votes in accordance with the wishes of the majority of the 600 parents, or whether the decision is left to his/her personal judgment. In the case of topics that are of special interest to parents, the assumption is that they can inform the parent representative about it, but it remains questionable whether there is room for a democratic discussion so that everyone is familiar with the issue. The idea, which aims to ensure that parents have an influence on the organization of work and the curriculum that ensures the well-being of children, cannot be implemented.

France

Parents in France also participate in the management of ECE settings. However, in France, they are organized as a kind of council of parents. Each group elects its parent representative, and then the selected representatives mutually agree on the way

to be included in the governing bodies. The contacts of parents' representatives (together with their photos) are clearly displayed in the lobby of the institutions. This type of organization enables interested parents to reach their representative and information that interests them in a relatively easy way. Due to the specific organization of ECE settings in France, all parents come to pick up their child at the same time, which gives the possibility of mutual meetings and agreements. On this occasion, parents' representatives can arrange additional meetings and inform other parents about important decisions related to ECE settings as well as ways to exercise parental rights, needs, and wishes.

Spain

In Spain, parents may influence school management through the parents' association of the school's pupils *Asociación de Madres y Padres de Alumnos* (AMPA). AMPA has an important part in the functioning of the schools, as it is one of the ways in which families participate in the development of the school's activities. AMPA oversee training, courses, talks, educational, cultural, sporting, recreational, and leisure activities in schools to ensure information and interaction between families and the school. The activities organized by the AMPA aim to improve the quality of education and training of pupils, but also their personal development within the school itself.

AMPA has three main roles. The informative role provides information between the school and the families. The information provided is related to the organization and legislation. The association's formative role provides training families regarding educational criteria, the progress of their children and projects that are developed both in the centre and at that educational stage in general. In other words, the AMPA tries to involve parents in everything related to the education of pupils. The third role is representational. AMPA can take place in the school council of the school and occasional meetings with the management. Therefore, parents may participate, through the association, in the financial management of the school, supervise that the school is in good condition and that the appropriate preventive measures are taken, be informed about school's Educational Project and the Annual General Programme, make and supervise important decisions, propose training courses for both parents and pupils and be informed of the activities carried out in the school and to be able to participate in them.

Despite the professional awareness of the importance of involving parents in all aspects of the work of educational institutions, practice very often differs from theory. Extensive research in Finnish early and preschool education institutions (Venninen & Purola, 2013) aimed to determine how educators perceive parental involvement in ECE settings. Although awareness of parents' participation as a predictor of complete child development is highly valued teachers reported on activities in which they do not want parents' participation. They showed that these are

organizational activities in which parents would decide on employment, activities that children engage in during their stay in institutions, the age appropriateness of stimulating materials and the organization of the daily routine. Teachers explained this by parents' lack of knowledge and understanding of the professional field of activity. These results indicate that educators do not always cope well with parental suggestions and involvement, therefore they want to retain part of their professional independence and right to expertise. It is interesting that some parents support the view that teachers are competent professionals, which implies that teachers and not parents should take responsibility in certain activities (Niikko & Havu-Nuutinen, 2009).

Conclusions

Despite the widespread use of Joyce Epstein's model, the model was developed in the context of North American culture with a special emphasis on the contribution of parents to educational institutions. If this approach is compared with the historical development of ideas about cooperation between educators and parents, it is evident that it corresponds to compensatory models in which parents are involved, in contrast to the contemporary approach that emphasizes relationship reciprocity. Modern pedagogical science starts from individual needs and possibilities, which does not fully correspond to this model because it starts from parents as a group from which the educational institution has expectations and bases its requirements towards inclusion on them. Parents' expectations are not the subject of this model, so it can be concluded that it is not a reciprocal relationship.

Reflecting on the McAllister Swap models in the relationship between parents and educators, it would be wrong to conclude that curriculum enrichment models and the partnership model are the most desirable in all institutions. In this way, they are once again trying to come up with one approach that should suit everyone, which is contrary to the appreciation of different family and institutional cultures. Although it is possible that in some institutions it is a question of a development approach, in which one approach follows another, it is justified to assume that there are institutions in which all of the above models are in force at the same time.

Hornby's model of parental participation is a model based on respect for the individual differences of parents and educators. This model deviates from traditional approaches in which one model fits all and finds multiple ways of parental and educational participation, depending on their possibilities and abilities. In modern society, he emphasizes the need to respect family (social) cultures to ensure the respect of each individual. This approach gives everyone equal opportunities to participate regardless of differences in interests or needs. The inclusiveness of this model corresponds to the greatest extent to an approach that respects both parents and educators in the process of cooperation.

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Chapter 7
Collaboration Theory: ECEC Leading Families to Lead Their Own Partnerships with ECEC

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Abstract This chapter gathers collaboration theories together into a discussion of how a partnership between ECEC and families is possible. It starts with a description of such a partnership, followed by the presentation of the collaboration theory. The emerging question of what constitutes a leader and a follower in the partnership between ECEC and families is answered with the help of the concept of pedagogical leadership and an empirical example of ECEC's work with migrant and refugee children in the United States. The chapter concludes with an outline of ECEC's responsibility for guiding parents to become leaders of the ECEC-home collaboration.

Keywords Collaboration · Partnership · Leader · Follower · Parents

What Is a Partnership Between ECEC and the Family?

The concept of a partnership originates from the field of economics, where it means a shared form of ownership invented during the Renaissance epoch in Florence (Padgett & McLean, 2006). Specifically, this form of ownership meant that not only one, but also multiple owners could share responsibility for a company, its incomes, and losses. Without going into the economic and legal details, this form of ownership brought a novel quality to the business sector that balanced the omnipresent competition with a network of engagement and collaboration towards a joint goal: the best interests of the company.

The idea of such a partnership was transferred into the field of education, and the subject of parental involvement in educational institutions in particular, to highlight the *equity* between a (pre)school and a family, acknowledge the expertise of both, and enhance the mutuality of their collaboration towards a joint goal of ensuring the

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best development and educational interests of the child (Epstein, 1990; Hornby, 2011). Ideally, partnerships between parents and teachers should be effective and cooperative relationships based on equality, reciprocity, responsibility, sharing, mutual engagement, support, and respect. According to Hornby (2011), in a partnership, both collaborating parts are seen as experts. The parents serve as experts in emotional connection and knowledge about their child, and the teachers serve as the authorities of educational/pedagogical expertise. The parents' emotional connection with the child makes them the best advocates for the child's interests, which, together with the teacher's professional judgement of the child's possibilities, can result in a complete and optimal pedagogical strategy, which safeguards the fulfilment of the child's needs and the realisation of their potential. Patrikakou et al. (2005) support this perspective and point to the joint and multifaceted influence that parents and teachers have on the child together as the essence of the positive power of the family-(pre)school partnership.

According to Patrikakou et al. (2005), for the partnership to function and achieve its desired effect, a match between the family's and the ECEC's understandings of their common goal is required. Keyes (2002) adds a couple of other requirements, such as: "(1) the degree of match between the teacher's and parent's culture and values; (2) societal forces at work on family and school; and (3) how teachers and parents view their roles" (p. 179). Such a "match," however, is no longer a frequent occurrence in the increasingly diverse and unequal societies we see today; with parents and teachers coming from different backgrounds, languages, and communities, it is more difficult for the parents and educators to "match" (Keyes, 2002). The question asked in this chapter, then, is whether real partnerships between ECECs and families are possible, and how to collaborate towards such partnerships.

Keyes (2002) underlines the importance of mutuality at the level of understanding and action towards the common goal and highlights a two-way dynamic of work as characterising a partnership. However, she also concurs with Patrikakou and Wissberg (1999), who conclude that regardless of the ideal of mutuality, "teachers are really the glue that holds the home/school partnerships together" (p. 36). The reason for this may lie in the fact that the partnerships between ECEC and families are unlike many other kinds of relationships in people's lives, since "the parent-teacher pairing occurs by assignment rather than choice" (Keyes, 2002, p. 179), and many curricula around the world assign ECEC the responsibility of enabling and maintaining cooperation with parents (Sadownik et al., 2021).

As assigned and not chosen relationships, such partnerships may depend on how well the parents "fit" into the ECEC professionals' image of collaboration, which is why the ECEC's inclusive and responsive understanding of the collaboration and ways of enhancing it are of great importance. Those in ECEC settings, as responsible leaders of partnerships with families, need to embrace and address all vulnerabilities emerging in the subjective and emotional relation (Maleš, 2015).

In the next section, I will reflect on how the partnership between ECEC and families may be supported from the perspective of collaboration theories, which allows us to look at families and ECEC as collaborating teams.

Collaboration Theories

ECEC and Families as a Collaborative Team

Collaboration theories (Colbry et al., 2014) emerged from the perspective of economics, with the aim of clarifying the relationships enabled through the division of labour between an individual (leader) and a group (followers). This means that collaboration as a concept implies a power and leadership relation, even though scholars such as Colbry et al. (2014) define the term as a cohesive, interpersonal interaction without a power imbalance and with the purpose of achieving a common goal. Eventual differences between the team members and their different roles illustrate that the team members represent complementary knowledge, skills, and abilities to reach the common goal together, rather than indicating any hierarchical relations.

When acting in collaborating teams, reflecting together on the team's practice and its goals influences and contributes to the learning and development of the team members (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Even though parents and ECEC professionals do not share the same daily practice, instead having their own fields in the home and ECEC, they still impact each other through collaboration. Henry's study on the interaction between parents and educators extended Schaefer's (1982) model of the interaction between these parts. Schaefer had shown that being in such a collaborative relationship influences the caregivers' ways of parenting and upbringing, as well as the ways the parents approach the educators. Analogically, this affects the teachers' ways of teaching and creating relationships with the families. Henry's (1996) study has additionally shown a reciprocal character of this collaboration that consists of the participant changing/developing various characteristics under the collaboration. The impact of collaboration was not seen as a one-way effect, nor was it only directed towards the child and her best interest; rather, it was to include all the parts involved.

The best development of the child and the child's well-being and well-becoming are at stake in ECEC's collaboration with parents. A common goal, and its common understanding, is the basis of a collaborating team. In other words, it constitutes the team. Robben et al. (2012) associate the joint understanding of common goals with shared values. The team's values, which they have in common or agree on, are then a prerequisite for the development of collaborative skills and actions. If the context shifts to collaboration between educators and parents, the team values can be related to the values or value-based goals of education and care that the parents and ECEC agree on. In increasingly diverse societies, it is thus important that the values of collaboration are formulated in a way that can include different cultural backgrounds and views.

Apart from joint values, or a value-related platform where diverse values can be practised, the team's ability to divide roles seems to be of importance. The role of the team leader is, however, an issue upon which collaboration theorists do not agree. While Robben et al. (2012) see the leadership role as crucial for a team's

success, Colbry et al. (2014) state that it should be avoided. Snell and Janney (2005), in line with Colbry, emphasise that collaboration is based on the principles of teamwork, collaborative learning, successful communication, and conflict management. Aasen (2018), who also sees teamwork as based on people's complementary competence in joining with each other towards a common goal, underlines, however, a great need for team leadership. In arguing for clear leadership, she underlines the need to make sure that all the team members share the same understanding of the common goal and coordinate the complementary character of cooperation, so that the diverse competences of different members contribute to the team's work in the best possible way. This approach is the basis for further reflection on pedagogical leadership in the next section of the chapter. Before I engage with this issue, I would first like to use collaboration theories to reflect on the possible challenges that may disturb teamwork and partnerships.

Collaboration Challenges

One of the challenges for developing an optimal partnership is implied in the team's orientation, which may be directed towards an individual or towards a team. The former is characterised by such activities as turn-taking, observing/doing, and status-seeking, and the latter by building and strengthening group cohesion, influencing others, and engaging in teamwork. While both orientations occur in a collaborative team, too much of an individual orientation may challenge the team character of the partnership. In parental collaboration with ECEC, all these elements come into play. Turn-taking emerges in the communication and information-sharing processes. Observing and doing may be related to both parents' and educators' observations of the child and family/ECEC functioning, whereby acting should proceed upon observations. In other words, the acts should be preceded by the sharing of each participant's observations. However, in all cases, collaboration does not necessarily go smoothly. Status-seeking practices interfere at both the individual and collective levels. Although both parents and teachers consider themselves and each other as experts in their respective areas of parenting and education, phenomena like fear of other people's roles, loss of one's own status, and caution about other people's opinions are very often present in the relationship between parents and professionals in the ECEC context (Gestwicki, 2016).

Moreover, distrust can also interfere with relations between parents and ECEC teachers. This distrust may be the result of negative parental experiences with other educational institutions. Some researchers (Gestwicki, 2016; Rockwell et al., 2010; Spratt, 2011) have emphasised personal experience as a decisive factor in achieving collaboration. People who had a bad experience of collaboration during their education, including those of their own parents and teachers, entered a cooperative relationship as adults/parents with resistance and negative attitudes and expectations. It is possible that competitive behaviour or status and confirmation seeking is often taking place within these groups of participants.

Another challenge connected to achieving an equal, collaborative partnership lies in the context. As Patel et al. (2012) explained, it is the context of collaboration that determines its forms, frequency, and activity. As collaboration between ECEC and families most often takes place in the context of the ECEC setting, it is easy for parents to fall into the role of "visitors." As visitors, the parents are not "at home," which means that they participate in activities prepared for them by the ECEC teachers, at a time that is chosen by the professionals. Participation in already prepared modalities of participation, also called a democracy deficit (Van Laere et al., 2018), may significantly limit parental participation and the possibility of sharing knowledge, information, or other resources that the parents perceive as most important or relevant. The ECEC staff, being the host of the meetings in which the collaboration takes place, becomes the leader of the collaboration. Being both a leader and a participant in the collaboration may be problematic, as it limits the equity between the partners. In other words, it disturbs their equal influence on the common goal and places ECEC in a superior position. A partnership with the implicit leadership of one of the participants may confuse both sides. In particular, the parents may get the impression that they are only welcomed to the collaboration as long as they agree with the ECEC (i.e., tacitly deciding on the goals and forms of collaboration). However, clear pedagogical leadership may also be a practice that saves the partnership, which I will discuss in the next section.

Pedagogical Leadership as Facilitating and Saving Partnerships

Pedagogical leadership is viewed as separate from the managerial mode (Sakr & O'Sullivan, 2022) and is related to the diverse aspects of ECEC functioning that require planning, joint understanding, acting, and engaging in reflection afterwards. The implementation of the curriculum in ECEC's practice and the quality of the education and care offered for the children, as well as that of parental participation, depend on pedagogical leadership (Aasen, 2018).

Pedagogical leadership is also an important concept relating the ECEC setting to a learning organisation that shall be able to reflect over its own practice and change it in line with the changing world, so that the pedagogical offering is responsive to the children's contexts (Vannebo & Gotvassli, 2014). The concept also underlines the fact that ECEC settings are not run by individuals and do not depend on individual efforts, but are instead constituted and driven by teams whose competence and joint understanding of their own practice is crucial for the quality of each ECEC setting (Aasen, 2018; Taguma et al., 2013).

This brings us back the understanding of a team as a group of people with complementary competence in collaborating towards a common goal (Aasen, 2018). According to Aasen, for a team to achieve its own goal, leadership and coordination of the process of cocreating the joint understanding of the goal are required, as is

safeguarding the complementary character of cooperation. The team leader shall then facilitate processes where the joint understanding of the team's goal is co-created and follow-up on the team's work, so that everyone's competence is used as a resource (Aasen, 2018).

This necessity of involving all team members' competences indicates that the team's work is based on interdependence. While the ECEC staff-team depends on each other in achieving the goals of providing the children education and care and implementing the curriculum in daily practice, the team of ECEC and families depends on each other when collaborating towards the goals of the child's best development, well-being, and becoming.

Interdependence invites forth distributed leadership, a particular type of leadership that can be enacted by multiple persons (Heikka & Hujala, 2013). On the one hand, distributed leadership invites "separate but interdependent work" (Spillane et al., 2001, p. 25); on the other hand, it requires great "efforts of leaders to make it work" (Heikka & Hujala, 2013, p. 571), which demands planning, active monitoring, and following up (MacBeath, 2005). A team member becoming a team leader does not disturb the team's work as long as the leadership is transparent for the team members, and they can articulate their own meanings regarding the process and its content (Aasen, 2018).

This perspective on pedagogical leadership as distributed team leadership is very productive if it relates to the collaboration between ECEC and parents. It allows ECEC to take the leading role, without dominating or marginalising the parental perspective. In contrast, pedagogical leadership, understood as distributed team leadership, is what actually safeguards the conditions for equal participation in ways that the family experiences as meaningful and relevant for them.

In this sense, it is the responsibility of the leadership to ensure that, rather than making the parents "fit" the ECEC's image of collaboration, the ECEC engages in reflection, flexibility, and dialogue with the parents, so that the modalities of collaboration that the parents recognise are in line with their values, interests, and heritages.

Pedagogical leadership in the parental collaboration that is located on the side of the ECEC relates this activity with parents to other demands that the ECEC needs to meet, such as the UNCRC (UN, 1989) and the curricula or framework plans. In anchoring pedagogical leadership in the child's right to grow up in his or her own family (Art. 9) and to obtain an education (Art. 28), the local framework plan or curriculum are important guidelines challenging the ECEC's leadership in collaboration with parents.

Possible Partnerships to Lead

After the concept of a partnership was shifted from economics to the educational field, it started to be defined and systematised in very different ways, and various types of partnerships were developed, such as formal, didactic, and pedagogical.

Below, I will briefly describe each of these and argue for the pedagogical as the optimal and most in line with the collaboration theory perspective.

Formal partnership refers to ECEC-based activities that involve parental participation. This means that this form of partnership assumes the parental presence in the place of the ECEC and active participation in the activity settings. According to Oostdam and Hooge (2013), active participation includes being in educational groups, helping with the organisation of various events, or participating in the work of governing bodies. Being aware that ECECs around the globe may engage in different activities for and with parents, it is possible to extend the forms of formal partnership to all kinds of planning, preparation, help, and volunteering in events/meetings happening in the ECEC settings. Active participation, however, is not a form of every parent's participation. It is a form of participation "reserved" for those who see it as relevant, and whose preferences, possibilities, and interests match with the possible modalities of this kind of participation. When leading collaboration with all parents, it is easy to consider the most active parents (i.e., the most active in the given modalities of participation) as a representation of the entire parental community. This is why an ECEC, when leading formal partnerships with families, needs to facilitate the communication and participation of those who, for diverse reasons, do not choose this option.

Another kind of partnership is the didactic form described by Oostdam and Hooge (2013). With a clear goal of enabling and enhancing learning processes and outcomes, it invites parental activity both in ECEC settings and at home. Within this partnership, the parent participates in the ECEC-based planning of the learning process of the child and implements these plans within his or her own time with the child. Regardless of the very narrow focus of this partnership, it invites a wide spectrum of possible activities, depending on the parental resources and activities agreed upon with the teacher. Even though Oostdam and Hooge (2013) use the term partnership to describe this relationship, I argue that it differs from the partnership described by other scholars (i.e., Hornby, 2000; Whalley, 2007), who underline the reciprocity and equity between the collaborating parts. In other words, this form of partnership requires a lot of sensitivity from the leading part, the ECEC, to embrace the knowledge and cultural resources on the parental side.

The third kind of partnership is pedagogical in nature, combining the educational and child-rearing goals and assuming the engagement of both the educators and parents. It also requires an overlap and completion of each other's roles, as in a team, as well as the understanding that "we" are a team, and not competitors, or experts and followers. The intersecting roles and responsibilities of both parties thus require a very careful balance of leadership, so that the parent feels recognised not only as an expert in the "upbringing" area, but also as an important voice in the development of an educational plan for the child.

Such a partnership can become very vulnerable if any of the collaborating parties are status seekers (Gestwicki, 2016). Status-seeking may take different forms, from direct discreditation of the other part in direct communication to avoidance of all interactions. In such cases, it is again the pedagogical leadership that comes into the picture, with the ECEC's responsibility to enhance positive collaboration with the

parent in a way that will reassure him/her in their role and diminish the possible status-seeking or other negative communication patterns. Another challenging aspect of this kind of equal partnership may be a parent in a vulnerable life situation, seeking necessary help and advice in/with/through the ECEC, whether it be economic, psychological, or of another subject. When facing such an imbalance of powers and resources between the family and the ECEC, pedagogical leadership is again the concept that enables reflection over the possible best response, which in the long run will enable parental participation. In the case of a vulnerable life situation, the distribution of leadership can take the form of help and a focus on fulfilling the parental needs or contacting the relevant institutions, so that the parent, after getting the necessary help, can participate as a partner.

Despite these possible challenges, I see this model as the most optimal and worthy of all leadership efforts, as it proposes a reciprocity-, equity-, and respect-based, two-way interaction model with a division of responsibilities and encourages reflective communication on common goals (Višnjić Jevtić, 2021).

Challenges to the Pedagogical Leadership of Collaborative Partnerships

What may pose a significant challenge to the distributed pedagogical leadership of partnerships with parents is the fact that many teachers tend to perceive themselves as experts, which, right at the start, considers the parental voice to be of less value and importance (Goldstein, 2003). Hiatt-Michael (2006) points out that the relationship can differ depending on whether parents are met on equal, democratic premises or allocated to silence and thus marginalised, depending on the teachers' internal standards for a proper parent to collaborate with (see also Hornby & Lafaele, 2011). Another challenge may be connected to the fact that educators operate with an us-them dichotomy in contact with parents, where the educators feel entitled to judge and assess the parents' ways of parenting, participating at school, and so on (Olender et al., 2010). Such attitudes do not seem to be a good basis for pedagogical leadership and the safeguarding of partnerships that parents could experience as acknowledging and meaningful.

As the pedagogical leadership of collaborative partnerships is important, I conducted an expert interview in the field of educational institutions' collaboration with refugee parents, a professor and OMEP's representative in UN, to discuss the characteristics of good partnerships, particularly with migrant and refugee families, and ways of leading such relationships in a respectful and acknowledging way. The response is based on the expert's experienced with educational system in the USA and comprises the following topics: trust, collaboration with the preschool, respecting family cultures, parental strengths, and the responsibility of the educational institution and its professionals.

Trust

Parents trust teachers, but communication is key to maintaining a trusting relationship. A reciprocal relationship develops when mutual gratitude and a commitment to lifelong learning are established. Parents for whom English is not their first language often apologise for their language skills (in English). An expert pointed out that it is good to mirror these behaviours; therefore, teachers could apologise for their Spanish-speaking skills (in Spanish) or Haitian Creole-speaking skills (in Haitian Creole). This approach can lead to the creation of a shared human experience and stress reduction. In such circumstances, it is more comfortable to speak in native tongues while referring to objects than relying on technology and gesticulations to communicate.

Migrant families often decide to leave their countries to provide their children with a better quality of life. Considering the different pathways of their migration, which often involve difficult conditions, it is necessary to understand their aspirations for better living conditions and the circumstances they went through as a result. The expert's experience is that about 10% of students had at least one parent walk them to school each day. Children would commonly comment on how nice their parents appeared during this activity, often saving their best clothes for the effort. Consequently, this attitude indicates that the education system is trusted and highly valued as a treasure beyond measure. Upon arrival, many families often share their aspirations and dreams for their children. Some of them would like their children to have the ability to attend medical school or pursue other prestigious professions, which would secure the children with a socio-economically comfortable lifestyle in the future. Unfortunately, this was only possible when the DREAM Act (offering support for individuals who are undocumented to receive higher education) was available. Schools have become a trusted beacon of hope for families in migrant communities in Florida and other states. Some may see children as a solution to their difficult situation. These expectations may place pressure on the children because they are more aware of their families' future expectations than the parents/guardians may realise.

Challenges to Trust

Given the situation in which there is a fear of possible deportation, sharing personal information is a challenge. Therefore, some parents/guardians may give their child an alternative name upon registration. Consequently, the calling of children's attendance on the first days of school can be a challenge for teachers who may not find a child on the class list, but also for children who do not respond to new names. In a small community of families in migration (many of whom are undocumented refugees), many people tend to know each other. Therefore, new arrivals become more confident about their status in the community. If their friends don't offer their real name first, eventually the family will often share their real names after a few months.

Collaboration with the Preschool

Parents tend to be enthusiastic about the schooling experience, although collabora-tion can be a challenge for families working long hours. The expert found that, often, both parents were working, and the children were at home with siblings and cousins. Sometimes, students joined the expert over the weekend in classroom prep-aration for Monday, and the expert recognised and acknowledged the opportunity to celebrate their involvement. Staying at school was one option; another option was staying at home all day and playing on the streets. Being on the street poses dangers for children who, due to peer pressure, are often dragged into gang violence. At first, the attraction strategies are friendly, with a few compliments from teenagers, such as promises for friendship, meals, cars, and money. After a few gifts, children are asked to commit violence to remain a part of the group. Young children are often easy targets. If a young child refuses to commit violence, as gang members request, they can end up in abusive situations. For example, in such situations, gangs may threaten to hurt the child's family with rape, fire, and more. If the child still refuses, the gang may beat up the child and leave it in a remote location. Oftentimes, teach-ers are the first to hear about these situations from children. They are often the first to report these events to school officers, counsellors, administrators, and home liai-sons. This may place teachers in a position of high secondary stress.

Considering parental (in)ability, it is necessary to organise certain activities in a way that is acceptable to parents. To deepen cooperation with families, the expert offered audio books as an option that enables parents to participate in supporting children's learning. According to the expert, many parents enjoyed this experience because it provided them with an opportunity to learn English with their children.

Respecting Family Cultures

A global education involves infusing elements of multicultural appreciation into each lesson, and such an approach must be central to curriculum development and modification. Unfortunately, children are often caught in the crossfire of a cultural mismatch between communities and big-business prescribed, fragmented, top-down school curricula. For example, while completing a standardised math test, they may be asked to imagine a certain number of fish in an aquarium. On one occa-sion, the expert reported that only one child in class had visited an aquarium. These test developers must consider socio-economic opportunities and cultural heritage before designing such distracting questions, which have culturally confounding variables. Children may walk away defeated when they cannot perform with such unreasonable, high-stakes expectations. No matter what the teachers say, children may hold an unreasonable understanding of their worth based on the scores they receive.

To make matters worse, the expert reported that some districts promised each child who scored above a 3.0 on a writing assessment a trip to Disney World. Despite

the learning gains, the children were entirely defeated when they did not get to go to Disney World. The children who did get to travel returned with the sense that society did not care for the poor village where they lived. For many, it was a socio-economic, spatial, and cultural shock to see children in new clothes, moving around the park with both parents available for a vacation/play time, and a bunch of money to be spent on materials within the park. This juxtaposition further confounded feelings of societal abandonment in the migrant community. This community was located an hour away from one of the wealthiest cities in the United States. Nevertheless, it took more than 50 years for the district to renovate the school, and when wealthy individuals came to donate bicycles at Christmas, this was simply a multicultural exchange without a sense of global education, shared community, and ongoing opportunities for mutually beneficial interaction.

Also, these schools were commonly graded as D or F schools based on a high-stakes assessment, yet these were some of the most supportive and talented educators that worked with the children. Thus, it was evident to the expert that choosing the appropriate methods or cognitive apprenticeships enhanced learning experiences.

Parental Strengths

Parents can give children experiences other than those they have in school. Some of the experiences promote ongoing love for learning outside of the classroom; model pride in their everyday tasks, no matter how big or small; encourage an expanded, extensive sense of civic agency/community involvement; and identify rare sources of cultural knowledge, among many others.

Responsibility of Educational Institutions

Given that we are talking about children who come from vulnerable environments, the (pre)school/ECEC must take responsibility for those areas in which their families do not (yet) feel sufficiently empowered (i.e., offering expert professional educator support in scaffolding and extending information, enhancing children's skills, and supporting discussions). As these families are often exposed to socio-economic deprivation, it is likely that the children do not have the necessary materials for their education. Therefore, it is important that the school provide basic materials and services that might be missing at home (e.g., food, health screenings, shelter for the day, and donated clothing).

Finally, the school represents a safe environment for children to stay. Very often, parents from deprived environments work multiple jobs to meet their most basic needs, so it is important to provide social environments that are monitored while parents are working.

Conclusion

The partnership between parents and educators represents the most desirable type of collaborative relationship in this context, whose characteristics are equality, responsibility, two-way communication, and action towards a common goal (Višnjić Jevtić, 2021). In this chapter, I tried to show that such partnerships are possible. Based on the collaboration theory and the concepts of a team and team leadership, I presented how ECEC's leadership of parental collaboration through reflective and distributed pedagogical leadership can enable pedagogical partnerships, with parental participation occurring on their own premises. Ceding to the leadership of ECEC does not need to mean that the ECEC dominates over parents but is instead cocreating and maintaining an inclusive framework for all parents' participation. This means that the ECEC that is leading the parental partnerships becomes responsible for empowering the parents and encouraging their leadership in the partnership.

As highlighted through the expert's interview, empowering partnerships with parents from minority, migrant, and refugee backgrounds is of particular importance. The more diverse modern societies are, the more likely the ECEC settings are to be understood as an arena for social inclusion (Sønsthagen, 2020; Višnjić-Jevtić et al., 2021). Children from culturally diverse communities face multiple difficulties. Some of these include lower participation in the educational process, difficulty adjusting to cultural contexts, peer violence, and mental health problems (Stevens & Vollebergh, 2008). Cooperation between teachers and parents is a key prerequisite for the well-being of children, especially vulnerable ones (Garvis et al., 2021; Višnjić-Jevtić, 2022).

The well-being of the children enhanced by ECEC and parents in collaborating partnerships is also implied in the rights of the child. As mentioned in the introduction, the collaboration between ECEC and parents is connected to Article 9 and Article 28 of the UNCRC (UN, 1989). The ECEC, through its wise leadership of parental collaboration, is then respecting children's rights, but it could also be violating them when ignoring or marginalising the parents' perspectives and input. Given that professionals may be the most familiar with this concept of children's rights, they are the most responsible for establishing effective cooperation with families.

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Chapter 8
Parental Involvement (Mis)recognised by Bourdieu's Conceptual Toolkit: *Illusio*, *Doxa*, *Habitus*, and *Capitals*

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Abstract This chapter presents Bourdieu's theoretical toolkit, which allows to look at the early childhood education and care (ECEC) settings' collaboration with families through concepts embracing both objective/societal conditions and individual characteristics. These concepts are *illusio, doxa, habitus*, and *capital*. The empirical example presented in the chapter shows how the power of the parents' economic, cultural, and social capital can negotiate and tailor the modes of involvement into parental needs and *illusios*. The analytical potential of Bourdieu's theory is also discussed in relation to the established pre-school and social pedagogy traditions, which imply different practices of parental involvement.

Keywords Capital · *Doxa* · *Habitus* · *Illusio* · Families · ECEC

Concepts Capturing Objectivity and Subjectivity

An objective that is deeply imprinted in Bourdieu's work is his efforts to overcome the dichotomic line between *objectivism* and *subjectivism*, which he found to be "the most fundamental, and the most ruinous" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 25). Observing over the years that the historical process of societies happens not only because of individuals obeying the rules, he developed a unique conceptual toolkit that captures the continuous permeation of the objective (structures) and the subjective (understandings, feelings, and actions) that arise in every social practice. He understood social practice as happening in the dialectics of the social structure and individuals' actions. This dialectic is constituted by the structure that structures individuals' actions, which also influences the structure that shapes their future actions. When proposing a theory able to capture the dynamic between the structure and

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individuals, he argues for "a science of dialectical relations between objective structures … and the subjective dispositions within which these structures are actualized, and which tend to reproduce them" (1977, p. 3).

Bourdieu's thought extends beyond the main philosophical and sociological traditions of his time. Influenced by structuralism (and the determinant character of structures) and existentialism (with its focus on individual choices), as well as Durkheim's emphasis on the structuring powers of social institutions and Marx's notion of ideology as a power structuring individual understanding of the world, Bourdieu developed his own "theoretical toolkit," with the principal "thinking tools" of *field*, *capital,* and *habitus* as the core concepts explaining the ongoing social game (Thomson, 2014).

The Field and Its *Illusio*

Bourdieu underlines that a social practice needs a social space, which refers to a *field* in which the social practice is going on. Bourdieu's understanding combines the social structure constituted by the crossing axes of social and cultural capital with *illusio*, a human sense of valuing particular phenomena or values as "at stake," or worthy of living, struggling through, or play for. When writing about the "field," Bourdieu is using the French word *le champ*, which is actually related to a football field, battlefield, or forcefield, and not to a meadow or a field of growing wheat, which are captured by the French word *les pré* (Thomson, 2014, p. 68). These metaphors show that humans belonging to a particular field must have a "sense of the game" (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 14) about the same *illusio*. What humans value depends on their habitus as it is established at the intersection of economic, cultural, and social capitals (Bourdieu, 2004). However, a focus on *illusio*, the object of human interest, allows for the borders between different fields and subfields to emerge.

Bourdieu's own investigations were centred on the fields of education (1977, 1998a), culture (1984, 1990), art (1996), science (1988), and television and journalism (1998b), among others. However, the borders between the fields remain problematic (Thomson, 2014) and blurred, as the social sectors and institutions seem to be intertwined with different social fields rather than standing on their own. Looking at *illusio* as structuring the fields and distinguishing them from each other helps to draw a map of the diverse fields crossing the sectors and practices of education, cultures, and science. While the fields may transform and change over time, remains keep being the structuring power of each emerging field.

Illusio is also what enables dynamics and games in the field. The field is always about *something* – something that is at stake for the members of the field. Bourdieu's usage of the metaphor of the football field allows us to realise that in a game about *illusio*, the players represent pre-determined positions, which influence their chances of achieving the stakes. The positions in the field depend on the players' levels of economic, cultural, and social capital. However, the levels of capital need to be sufficient to (mis)recognise (*doxa*) something as "at stake" and play for it.

Different social fields emerge along the axes of social and cultural capital, the different levels of which saturate people's lives with a variety of meanings, values, and tastes. Apart from the variety of fields, Bourdieu also points out their homologies, one of which is the field of power. Power in a field comes from the accumulation of economic and cultural capital that allows for greater influence on one's own field, but also on other fields (Thomson, 2014).

In this chapter, I reflect on the practice of ECEC's collaboration with parents as one where very different "parental fields" and "parental *illusios*" cross and interact. In the example of a private ECEC constituted at an intersection of economic and educational fields, the power of high economic and social capital will be shown, and its relationship to cultural capital will also be discussed.

Capital

As one of Bourdieu's thinking tools, the various forms of capital structure the social structure. More specifically, the intersections of different accumulations of different kinds of capital constitute different social fields with different *illusios.* Individuals entering particular fields have the "right" dispositions (*habitus*) to resonate with particular *illusios* and join the game of achieving the sensed/chosen *illusio*. The dispositions (habitus) of an individual are an effect of the capital accumulated in the individual's life.

Bourdieu (2004) systematises capital in different ways. Based on the kinds of resources they contain, he distinguishes between "*economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in form of property rights (…), *cultural capital,* which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; (…), *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 16). Each of these types of capital exists in an embodied, objectified, and institutionalised form.

The embodied form relates to a set of individual dispositions (*habitus*). Economic, cultural, and social capital will manifest themselves in a particular way of being in and understanding the world – in behaving, talking, and sensing the importance of diverse activities. People with a high level of cultural capital, who have been exposed to a good education in art and literature, for example, will articulate themselves differently and make other choices than people with rather practical or technical educational backgrounds and cultural experiences connected to pop-culture spectacles. As indicated in the quote above, the type and quality of education and experiences one receives in his/her life depend on economic capital. However, the economic capital cannot replace the cultural; it is the cultural capital that will influence the *illusio* that an individual will recognise and play for, while economic capital will safeguard an individual's freedom to choose the most optimal strategy to achieve the *illusio* (Bourdieu, 2004).

Another form is objectified capital. While cultural capital can be objectified in the form of particular cultural goods (e.g., pieces of art, books, artefacts, objects, etc.), economic capital will be objectified in money and properties. Social capital becomes objectified in the networks one is a member of and the resources that are possible to access through the network. Institutionalisation of a particular form of capital involves participation in a relevant social institution and the institutionalisation of money into property right; cultural capital into diplomas, academic degrees, and prizes; and social capital into very noble titles and awards confirming the individual's position and value, among others.

Capital accumulates over time, and its levels limit possible social mobility within an individual's life, apart from some exceptional social carriers. Capital is "what makes the games of society – not least, the economic game – something other than simple games of change offering at every moment the possibility of miracle" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 15). The levels of capital make us choose a particular *illusios* and position us in a more or less advantaged position to achieve it.

When discussing the forms of capital in relation to the social practice of parental involvement in ECEC, the most interesting type might appear to be social capital, which is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 21). Such a "back-up" of collectively owned capital may be a way of overcoming inequalities between the individual/family capitals, and by that mitigate the effect of socio-economic differences.

Later in this chapter, I will present a more complex picture of a private kindergarten and their management of the diversity of parental capital and *habituses*. However, to more thoroughly understand the complexity of the empirical example, a few more thinking tools should be introduced.

Habitus **and** *Doxa*

Habitus is the central concept of Bourdieu's toolbox that clearly shows how objective social conditioning intertwines with the individual's (subjective) sense of oneself and the surrounding world, and how the "structured structure" through internalisation starts structuring our meanings, choices, and actions. Habitus shows how the forms of capital at the intersection of which a human life emerges are internalised and embodied into the very unique entity of an acting individual.

Bourdieu (1990) defines habitus as "a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations" (p. 53). As a "structuring structure," the habitus is "an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to the experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures" (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992,

p. 133). As a "structuring structure," the habitus also gives one a sense of one's own (and others') place and role in the world of one's lived environment (Bourdieu, 2005).

In forming an individual at the intersection of particular levels of capital, habitus allows one to recognise specific meanings, values, or objects as an *illusio* worthy of the efforts of being played for and the use of one's own resources as tools to achieve it. Regardless of the social conditioning common to many sharing the same socio-economic background, habitus also becomes something very personal. According to Bourdieu (2005), "In that respect habitus is very similar to what was traditionally called character, but with very important difference: that habitus, as the Latin indicates, is something non-natural, a set of acquired characteristics which are the product of social conditions" (p. 45). The dispositions or the "character" are characteristics of permanent manners of "being, seeing, acting and thinking (…) as a system of long-lasting schemes or schemata of structures of perception, conception and action" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 44). As such, the habitus can be understand as "a peculiar philosophy of action, or better, of practice" (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 44).

As various schemes of perception and understanding the world abound, the habitus is strongly related to *doxa*, with an analogical function of Marx's ideology and false consciousness. *Doxa* is a way of understanding oneself in the world and the world around oneself that strengthens and legitimates the habitus and its actions. Being a product of particular social positioning at a particular intersection of capital always makes doxa a misrecognition. The *mis*recognition lies in the fact that, while a particular recognition is possible and true, it is only so from a particular social position, and this perspective works in favour of reproducing this social positioning. In other words, society can last, and the social order can be reproduced only because of people's general misrecognition of their own place, which makes them choose values and *illusio* that allow for continuance. *Doxa* is then a "pre-verbal taking for granted of the world that flows from practical sense" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68); as such, it is better understood as a *mis*recognition rather than just "undisputed, pre-reflexive, naive, native compliance with the fundamental presuppositions of the field" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 68).

In terms of parental involvement, *doxa* may be related to the "democracy deficit" described by Van Laere et al. (2018), which refers to the fact that "the goals and modalities of parental involvement are defined without involvement of the parents themselves" (p. 189). However, the fact that these imposed forms of involvement are accepted and practised by the parents, and seen by them and the ECEC settings as real ways of getting involved, shows the power of *doxa*. This misrecognition of imposed forms of action as own forms of engagement safeguards the continuation of parental involvement as we know it, and as it always has been.

Parental Involvement in Bourdieu's Terms

In the two traditions of early childhood education distinguished by Bennet (2010), the Anglo-Saxon pre-school tradition and the Nordic social pedagogy tradition, different goals and forms of parental involvement are implied. Using Bourdieu's

toolkit, it is possible to say that the pre-school tradition, aiming at supporting the home in preparing the child for school and achieving school readiness, may be interpreted as "equipping" the home and the child with the legitimate, school-relevant (white middle-class) cultural capital that is recognised and rewarded by the school system. The study by Kampichler (2021, 2022), presented in Chap. 9, shows this kind of "equipping" with the right capital through examples of the involvement of Roma families in ECEC. Such parental involvement is founded on the ECEC's perception of the parents as lacking cultural capital and desperately needing to be equipped with a basic version. At the same time, middle-class families in private and public ECEC settings are seen as resourceful and able to contribute to their children's early education on their own terms.

All this is to say that educational institutions, here the ECEC, have their own expectations of the parental *habitus* and meet parents of different *habituses* in different ways. As an example, Bourdieu's studies with Passeron (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990) show how the middle-class habitus is favoured by educational institutions in France. This middle-class habitus and its underpinning of the expectations of educational institutions towards families has been detected in many studies around the world (Eliyahu-Levi, 2022; Leareau & McNamara Horvat, 1999; Sengonul, 2022; Uysal Bayrak et al., 2021; Solberg, 2018). By invaliding capitals of im/migrant groups, national minorities, or lower socio-economic status made many intervention programs about equipping the disadvantaged groups with the "right" capitals (Gedal Douglass et al., 2021; Wright et al., 2021), or challenged the institutions to acknowledge a greater ray of cultural capitals as resourceful and relevant (Ejuu & Opiyo, 2022; Fenech & Skattebol, 2021; McKee et al., 2022; Warren & Locklear, 2021). The theory of Bourdieu, with his use of the term *habitus*, is thus to explain how the structures (differently) structure interactions between professionals and different groups of parents, and what modes of involvement can be negotiated once the parent/caregiver becomes the one that the educational institution listens to with respect.

Private ECEC Setting Manoeuvring Between Parental *Habituses*

To show other dimensions of collaboration between ECEC and the parents that can be interpreted with the use of Bourdieu's toolkit, I will describe a few narratives involving a headmaster and three parents from a private ECEC setting in Poland. As a private ECEC setting, it grows at the intersection of the fields and values of education and business. This particular school is an institution of early education and care regulated by the Polish Ministry of Education (2017) and, at the same time, a company functioning in a real market with the goal of making economic profits. As the headmaster told me,

The profits of ECEC depend on the parental fees, which are quite high, and this explains why they expect a high quality of service that tailors the general guidelines for ECEC to their needs. The needs are, however, distinctive, as the parents are very different. (Headmaster)

The three parents whom the headmaster mentioned to show the variety of their needs were a company owner (Mother 1), an art teacher at an upper secondary school (Father 1), and a journalist at the local TV station (Mother 2). All the parents had higher education degrees of different kinds. Distinctions among their cultural capitals, seemed to be additionally strenghtened by their economic capitals – and made them sensitive for and responsive to quite different *illusios.*

Mother 1 graduated from a technical university and started a company that generated high economic profits, while her knowledge connected to *humaniora* and art was limited. She perceived the ECEC settings as consisting of "both experts on children and their development as well as absolutely necessary help" in making her professional life possible. Her involvement in ECEC was mostly economic: "I am always willing to help this ECEC setting economically, as their great job allows me to run my business, but I really can't attend all these events for children and parents that they are organising. What I would support is even more extracurricular activities for additional fees, as it would allow me to work with a good conscious, knowing that my child is receiving the best education from the experts" (Mother 1).

Father 1, as an art teacher in a public school, represented rather limited economic capital, but a high level of orientation in temporary art and literature, as well as children's art and literature. His cultural capital allowed him to recognise the value of early education, which is why, regardless of the quite limited income that he and his partner received, the (rainbow) family chose "this ECEC setting, known for its high quality, and high prices. But it's worth it" (Father 2). As an art teacher, he offered to run an extracurricular art circle, the income from which was applied toward this family's tuition: "I have a lot of time after work and would really like to be involved in my daughter's life as much as possible, so running the art circle is an extra bonus, both in terms of reduced tuition and time spent with my daughter. Apart from this, I am always attending and helping with every event arranged by the ECEC setting" (Father 1).

Mother 2, a journalist at a local TV station, represented a high economic status and "good knowledge about the culture, literature, and art that may be forgotten during work in a TV station" (Mother 2). As a mother of a child with disabilities, she was interested in promoting and normalising such experiences of childhood and parenthood, for which she used both her job and ECEC:

I'm running a documentary through my work, which is about parenting with disabilities. My aim is to normalise it and challenge people's biases and fears, so I invite myself with the camera to all the events run by the ECEC, or even ask them to arrange some extra events so I could film them. I want to show that a childhood with Down syndrome is normal, that parenting with Down syndrome is normal, and that a kindergarten with Down syndrome is normal and that our parents are there for all of our kids. (Mother 2)

The *illusio* of changing the disability discourse was not the only one that this mother had. She also wanted a good childhood for her son:

I want him to be invited to birthdays, to other children's homes, and to have friends. Apart from attending these events, I also invite other children to our home. I talk with the parents when they are picking up their kids. I don't want them to be afraid to invite my boy, and it seems to work. They have started inviting, and the majority attend the events I am arranging and allow me to film them. (Mother 2)

The diverse *illusios* driving the parents' lives seem to be mirrored in their different expectations towards the ECEC setting and their activities that take place there (or lack thereof). While Mother 1, with her life dedicated to her company, needs more time most of all and thus expects "the experts" to release her from her mothering, Father 1 is offering his spare time to run an art circle at the ECEC. The *doxa* of Mother 1, seeing her child getting the best education from the experts during curricular instruction and extracurricular activities, is completely different from Father's 1, who, according to his *doxa*, is paid (in the form of a tuition reduction) for doing what he values most (time with his daughter and art).

In the eyes of the headmaster, he is engaging in an unbeneficial transaction:

It's not our case to have an opinion on what the family uses their money for, and how they make money, but if I were the fathers, I would instead go for a cheaper ECEC and have more money for travels during the summer break. I would also sell my competence at a higher price than what the art circle here pays. With their education and time, they would be able to provide their daughter with the best education even if she attended a cheaper ECEC. However, it's their choice. (Headmaster)

However, the father's *doxa* makes him believe that it is he who is outsmarting the world by selling something that does not cost him anything and getting paid for realising his highest values. What is at stake in his involvement in ECEC is the priceless time spent with his daughter and children, who are important in her life.

Mother 2 is also very focused on the social environment of her child and invests a lot in transforming the children and parents in the ECEC into the social capital of her son, which is the "back-up" he needs to have a good, "normal" childhood. The social capital of the ECEC, together with the social capital she gains access to through her work, is expected to promote the normality of childhood with disabilities in the public discourse and fulfil the mother's *illusio* of normalisation of parenthood/childhood with Down syndrome. The ECEC supports her efforts very much, but not only for ethical reasons, as the headmaster sees great economic value in the free advertisement of the ECEC through her documentary.

The headmaster's narrative below shows how she manoeuvres between the different expectations of the parents so that they continue to be the "customers" of the ECEC setting, even if she personally or pedagogically does not agree with their *illusios* or lifestyles. Even though neither the headmaster nor the staff believe that a wide range of extracurricular activities with "experts" can replace time and relationships with the parents, no one shares their opinions with the mother. The mother's economic capital that she also brings into the ECEC makes the staff support her *doxa* of the best experts providing her child with the best education and care. For extra payment, her child is taken care of by one of the pedagogues during the events for the children and parents. The headmaster could avoid organising so many events for children and parents (which are clearly making the absence of Mother 1 even

more visible), but the support for the values of Mother 2 and free advertisement for the ECEC are powers that even the pure economic capital of Mother 1 cannot stop. However, the economic capital of Mother 1 creates a field of power in which pedagogical argumentation for more time and arenas for strengthening the relationship between the child and the parent become impossible to articulate:

> So, it is very sad when the parents don't have time for their children. No matter how many sports and art activities we provide—and thanks to Mother 1, we provide a lot—the child will always need time with the parents. I can see that it is extra painful for this child to be at all the events for children and parents without his mom, and it's me or someone from the staff taking extra care of him. Maybe we should confront the mother and tell her that she should be more present in the life of her child, but then she would find another ECEC… so we do what we can, so that such events are not too sad for this child, and there are many of these events because of Mother 2 insisting on one at least once in a month. I totally support her in her activism, but I can see that I'm also very happy for the advertisement of our ECEC. It really attracts more parents to us, not necessarily with disabled children, but parents who want their children to be respectful of diversity among humans. (Headmaster)

This narrative shows how the field of power created by exceptionally high levels of particular parental capital blocks the pedagogical interventions that would take place in the case of less privileged parents. In the case of a family with a lower socio-economic background "abandoning" the child with the ECEC experts, the ECEC would most likely confront or mentor the parents, or contact relevant services capable of helping the family manage their priorities and time. Here, in the case of an economically privileged family and the economic benefits from the child staying extra hours, the ECEC instead releases the mother from her parental responsibilities and confirms her *doxa* of the child's developmental benefits.

Knowing that for the child of Mother 1, the events for parents and children organised by Mother 2 are the most painful, ECEC could think of limiting them. However, the media-related social capital of Mother 2 creates a field of power within which the needs of Child 1 are fulfilled in another way. The capital of Mother 1 comes to the ECEC as long as her child attends it, while the social capital of Mother 2 can help attract new, "really good parents" with "really good values" in the longer run. Here, it is also important to mention the habitual and value-related match of the headmaster and Mother 2 in relation to the importance of promoting the normality of childhood with a disability and strengthening the social relationships around her son. The question is, however, whether the ECEC would provide analogical support for a mother of a child with disabilities who would not be able to disseminate this information in the public media.

However, it is evident that economic and social capital and benefits were not the only things valued by the headmaster. Father 1 was important for ECEC not only as a relatively cheap art educator and a regular payer of tuition, but also because he was one of those "parents that we really want to have here. With good values, not only money, but family—in this case a rainbow family, so good values, openness, diversity. This is what we believe as teachers here" (Headmaster). Apart from the habitual match with the teachers, the diversity was also a marketing factor, as "spreading the news of us as a rainbow-friendly ECEC in homophobic Poland will possibly attract many well-situated, rainbow families to us." However, the headmaster

underlined that the pleasure of some habitual mutuality and the same, open-minded understanding of the world is of great importance for the sake of satisfaction with one's work: "I really want the children to grow up in the spirit of diversity; with our tuition we talk only about a middle-class diversity, but still. I really prefer the open-minded, well-educated families to some of the posh, conservative ones. Even though our business depends on money, I can't say that money is everything" (Headmaster).

Attracting and keeping different types of middle-class families was important to legitimise different lifestyles and show the children that other lives are possible, but as humans, we still have the same values:

> You know, the richer or posh ones may sometimes feel that they are somehow better, while the more educated feel better because they invest in the important stuff, like culture or education, not just money. For me, it is important that the children get a sense of diversity and different lifestyles being possible; although it's only a middle-class diversity, they can still learn that as humans, we have the same values and that we can live as we want. (Headmaster)

The examples of this ECEC setting and the narratives of the headmaster and parents showed the powers of different capital and *illusios* coming into the picture in the social practice of ECEC's collaboration with parents. It is fascinating to attend to the kind of powers (in the form of economic and social capital) that diminish the teachers' pedagogical voice in interaction with parents, and how an ECEC depending on parental economic resources needs to manoeuvre between their own beliefs and those of the parents, and thus between different *illusios* and forms of capital. It is also interesting to consider how pedagogical values emerge when safeguarding the economic resources for the ECEC. For example, the ECEC took extra care of the child whose parents could not attend the events for parents and children, so that the parental absence was not experienced as a lack, but rather as extra care. Moreover, regardless of the benefits of free advertisement through the documentary, the ECEC really identified with the values being promoted. Father 1 was also appreciated not because of being a cheap art educator, but because he was a well-educated, engaged, and open-minded parent with good values. Another interesting aspect of this empirical example is that it shows how upper middle-class parents have the possibility to negotiate forms and modes of parental involvement. It seems that those parents who enter (particularly a private) ECEC setting with sufficiently high levels of economic and social capital do not suffer from a *democracy deficit* (Van Laere et al., 2018). Quite the opposite, in fact, as it might actually be the professional, pedagogical knowledge that is marginalised.

Conclusion

In this chapter, Bourdieu's thinking tools were presented to inspire an alternative look at the social practice of ECEC collaboration with families. The concept of *habitus* allows us to look at both the more-than-parents and ECEC staff's understanding of the practice of parental involvement through their social positioning and

access to diverse types of capital. The empirical example presented in the chapter shows a private ECEC setting established at the intersection of educational and economic fields, interacting with different social fields and the *illusios* of parents, where economic, cultural, and social capital became significant forces in negotiating modes of parental involvement.

Bourdieu's theory also allows us to reflect on practices of parental involvement in different traditions of ECEC, including the pre-school tradition, where the families and children are "equipped" with the legitimate cultural capital (unless they are middle-class families), and the social pedagogy tradition, where the efforts are focused on strengthening social capital among parents (Bennet, 2010). The potential of this toolkit lies in its ability to perceive differences among parents and to establish a more nuanced picture of the practice of more-than-parental involvement, both in case of very heterogeneous and homogenous groups of families.

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Chapter 9
Theory of Practice Architectures: Parental Involvement Through *Sayings*, *Doings*, and *Relatings*

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Abstract This chapter presents the theory of practice architectures, which allows us to look at and reflect upon parental involvement as a practice with its own traditions. As such a practice, parental involvement is constituted by cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements that Kemmis et al. (Changing practices, changing education, 1st edn. Springer Singapore, Imprint: Springer, 2014) have respectively referred to as *sayings*, *doings*, and *relatings*. This theory allows us to study parental involvement by focusing on each of these aspects, but also on ecologies that are shared with other practices, which is shown in empirical examples from the Czech Republic and Tanzania. The strength of this theory as a conceptual toolkit lies in its ability to capture the complexity of the social practice that PI is, its openness to contextualisation, and its potential for explaining how the same *sayings* turn into very different *doings* because of power and solidarity relations.

Keywords Practice architectures · Sayings · Doings · Relatings · ECEC

Living in Practices as a Theory: Sayings – Doings – Relatings

Starting from an assumption that "we live our lives in practices" (Kemmis, 2019, p. 1), the theory of practice architectures aims to unpack and understand these practices, but also to "refresh a sensibility to that fact: a sensibility to how we live our lives in practices, and what that means in terms of our relationships with each other and the world – as well as our relationships with the community of life on Planet Earth and with the Cosmos" (Kemmis, 2019, p. 2). Based on Schatzki's (2002, 2010)

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work on practice as a nexus of discursive, physical, and social dimensions, Kemmis et al. (2014) develop a theory of practice architectures whose core elements of *sayings*, *doings,* and *relatings* are thought to shape every practice that occurs.

According to this theory (Kemmis et al., 2014), practices "come into being because people, acting not alone but collectively, bring them into being" (p. 32), which means that individual meanings and actions come into the picture only as "orchestrated in collective social-relational projects" (p. 32). The human collective does not, however, operate in a vacuum, but is instead "framed" by cultural-discursive, material-economic, and socio-political arrangements, which can be abbreviated into *sayings*, *doings*, and *relatings*. All of these aspects come together in Kemmis et al.'s (2014) definition of practice:

> A practice is a form of socially established cooperative human activity in which characteristic arrangements of actions and activities (doings) are comprehensible in terms of arrangements of relevant ideas in characteristic discourses (sayings), when the people and objects involved are distributed in characteristic arrangements of relationships (relatings), and when this complex of sayings, doings, and relatings "hangs together" in a distinctive project. (p. 31)

The *cultural-discursive* arrangements operating in the medium of *language* and the dimension of *semantic space* are those that lay the foundation for the discourse(s) that articulate(s) the values, guidelines, instructions, interpretations, or justification of particular practices. In the semantic space of a particular practice, support for, criticism of, and resistance to understanding the practice can be articulated, all of which fall under the category of *sayings*.

Not all the sayings, however, will reach physical space-time and materialise through activity and work. Material factors (e.g., space, room, accessible artefacts, and tools) and the economy are important factors that allow for activities to happen. Not of a lower importance are the socio-political arrangements, by which the power and solidarity relations underpinning different sectors can facilitate the implementation of particular sayings while silencing others. The socio-political arrangements performed through power and solidarity can emerge from both informal bonds, such as friendships, or more formal connections with organisational functions, positions, or networks. These socio-political arrangements capture "relationships between people and non-human objects" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 32), which can be formed by either (digital) tools mediating communication and relations between people or an individual's usage of and dependence on particular objects.

What Kemmis et al. (2014) try to capture is the practice as it happens, as "always located in particular sites and particular times" (p. 33). This explains why the theory is much less focused on developing an abstract conceptualisation of practice than on capturing it as it occurs (Schatzki, 2006):

> The practices that we observe in real life are not abstractions with an ideal form of their own; they are composed *on* the site where they happen, and they are composed *of* resources found in or brought to the site: cultural-discursive resources, material-economic resources, and social-political resources. (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 33)

What all of this means is that the practice emerges out of the sayings, doings, or relatings that either already exist or are brought forth into existence through such actions. The emergence of the practice is about engaging and "*orchestrating*" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 34, original emphasis) the discursive, physical, and social resources. The happening of a practice also leaves its footprints, which are "particular kinds of discursive, physical, and social traces or residues of *what happened* through the unfolding of the practice" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 34, original emphasis). This means that the practice engages and becomes entangled with the practice architectures in a particular setting, and thus becomes "part of the living fabric of the place" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 36).

The complexity of practice that captures the individual at its site, emerging out of the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and socio-political arrangements, is clarified by Kemmis et al. (2014) through the model presented below (Fig. 9.1).

On the figure's lowest level, Kemmis shows how all the dimensions of practice architecture are being "bundled together" in a happening practice. The concept of "bundling" comes from Schatzki's (2012) descriptions of the relationship between practices and arrangements, which he calls *practice-arrangement bundles* and are treated as bundled together:

> Because the relationship between practices and material entities is so intimate, I believe that the notion of a bundle of practices and material arrangements is fundamental to analyzing human life …. To say that practices and arrangements bundle is to say (1) that practices
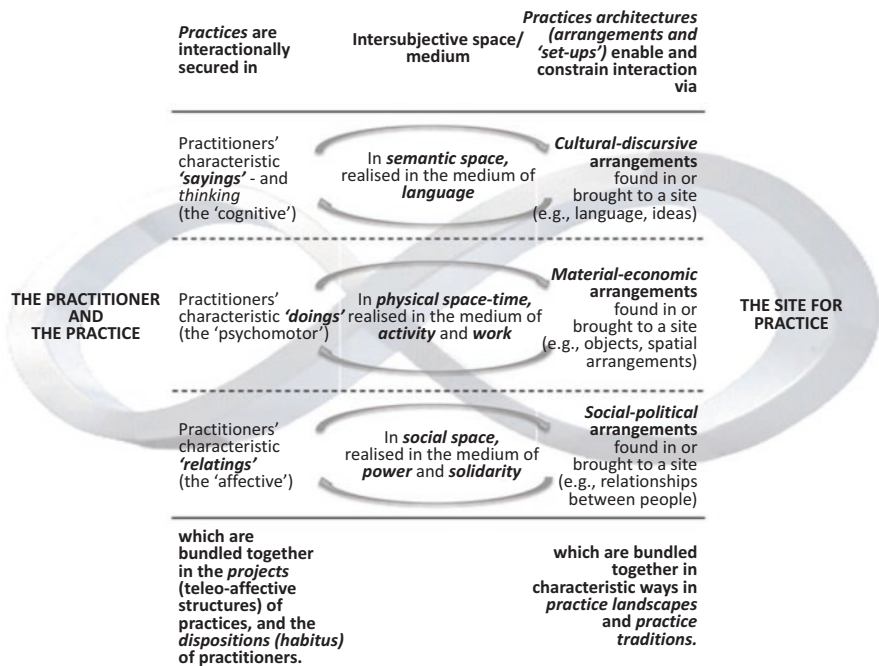

Fig. 9.1 Theory of practice and practice architectures. (Source: Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 38)

effect, use, give meaning to, and are inseparable from arrangements, while (2) arrangements channel, prefigure, facilitate, and are essential to practices. (Schatzki, 2012, p. 16, cited in Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 37)

Schatzki here is saying that practice architectures (comprising over the material-economic and socio-political aspects) are in a dialectical relation to the practice itself. They constitute the practice, but it is the practice that gives the conditions meaning and effects and influences them. This means that a practice started with the use of very limited economic resources can, by its practising/happening or through the effects its performance gives to the broader society, influence the distribution of material-economic resources. Early childhood education and care is thus a great example of such a practice: starting with the very limited resources of philanthropists, it developed into a publicly funded sector in many countries (Kamerman, 2006).

Changing Practices as Changing Practice Traditions

Following Kemmis et al. (2014), the unpacking of practice in its complexity also allows us to understand why some practices function only at the level of *sayings* and never reach the dimension of action. Both material-economic resources and relational factors can play a role here. The relational factors can block a new practice in the dimension of sayings, as the power of old, well-established *doings* and our *solidarity* with them gets activated.

When considering practice architectures, Kemmis et al. (2014) also talk about *practice traditions*. These are the footprints and social memories of a practice that are imprinted across all dimensions of practice architectures:

In the semantic dimension, they are stored in the logos of shared language used by people in a particular site. In the dimension of physical space-time, social memories are stored in physical setups and the activity structures of work and life at the site. In the dimension of social space, social memories are stored in such arrangements as organizational-institutional roles, rules and functions or the inclusive and exclusive relationships characteristic of the different lifeworlds people inhabit in the site. (p. 32)

Practices become entangled with all the dimensions and emerge as a "part of the living fabric of the place" (Kemmis et al., 2014, p. 36). If they change, they change ecologically, with the involvement of all dimensions and, most often, in relation to other practices.

Ecologies of Practice

Practice understood as a human way of living is not a practice happening in a vacuum, but a practice connected to other practices. In other words, "practices are established and exist in sites, in ecological arrangements" (Kemmis et al., 2014,

p. 43). The relationships between practices and their architectures may differ. An example given by Kemmis et al. (2014) is the practice of teaching, which becomes a practice architecture for students' learning:

> To put it more precisely, the specific cultural-discursive, material-economic, and socio-political arrangements that come into being and are materialised in the unfolding of a particular practice of teaching (teacher's sayings, doings, and relatings) in a particular site enable and constrain the way the practice of learning can unfold for the students in the site. (p. 43)

In relation to parental involvement, we can say that the practice of ECE settings' collaboration with parents becomes the practice architecture of parental involvement. Such an ecology of the practice of parental involvement can explain the "democracy deficit" described by Van Laere et al. (2018), which refers to how "the goals and modalities of parental involvement are defined without involvement of the parents themselves" (p. 189); these goals and modalities are within theories and an effect of ecologies of practice, whereby the ECE practice of collaboration with parents becomes the architecture for the practice of parental involvement. The ECEC settings' sayings on possible parental doings, the happening doings, and the mixture of power and solidarity between the professionals and caregivers constitute the democracy deficit. Democracy as a value in collaboration between ECEC and families operates, then, at the level of *sayings*. The theory of practice, and also architecture, thus inspires us to ask, "Whose *sayings*?" Is it a cultural value underpinning ECE and other social practices, or a directly articulated postulate of specific families or professionals, or maybe even researchers? Many different answers are possible in diverse socio-cultural contexts and regions of the world. My point is that the theory of practice architecture enables reflection and novel explanations of the diverse phenomena included in parental involvement. Accordingly, the next sections of this chapter will focus directly on the practice of parental collaboration with ECE.

Parental Involvement: Sayings Anchored in Cultural-Discursive Arrangements

The cultural-discursive arrangements in the form of *sayings* that facilitate and constrain parental involvement can operate both internationally and nationally, but they can also be related to very local cultures and values. In the preface of this book, the co-author and me mention the sayings operating at the very global level, the UNCRC (UN, 1989), and the intersection of the child's right to education (Art. 28) and the child's right to live in a family (Art. 9). This intersection unfolds the necessity of synergetic practices that facilitate the realisation of these rights. Parental involvement in ECEC is one such practice, and the curricula for ECEC and framework plans in the majority of countries, to a lesser or greater degree, encourage ECEC's collaboration with children's parents and families.

In an anthology (Garvis et al., 2022) with the works of authors from 25 countries describing parental engagement in ECE, every chapter starts with a reference to a framework plan, curriculum, or other key steering document. This shows that the sets of understandings of parental involvement that have been initiated, strengthened, and spread through the key policy documents are seen by academics as important for the practice of parental involvement. A lack of these sayings, or a lack of this part of the practice architecture, leaves the practice to others who may be less professional, the more private values and attitudes of teachers, or ECEC's traditions for collaborating with parents (Garvis et al., 2022).

The sayings of researchers are also an important part of the architecture of parental involvement practice, but this is a discourse that can reveal many diverse and opposing meanings and is much less power marked than steering documents. However, the researchers' sayings can *relate* to the official discourse and challenge, inspire, confirm, or reproduce it, and thus eventually initiate or block another way of understanding. The research's sayings can also channel or narrow the broader policies and thus strengthen and launch only a particular side of them.

A very interesting case of official *sayings* related to parental involvement being channelled is Tanzania. While the "Curriculum and Syllabus for Pre-Primary Education" (Tanzanian Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2016) highlights the crucial role of parents/guardians in the transition to primary school and points out an array of activities in which the parents could be included, the research on parental involvement seems to take for granted that parental involvement is about home-based practices supporting children's learning and thus measures only this level.

The array of activities that the "Curriculum and Syllabus for Pre-Primary Education" (Tanzanian Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology, 2016) states that the parents could be involved in are as follows:

(i)   Decision-making processes on the establishment and management of pre-primary schools in their area.
(ii) Volunteering in school development activities.
(iii) Monitoring and evaluating children's progress both at school and at home.
(iv) Teaching and learning of the child through preparation of teaching and learning materials, providing funds for purchasing teaching and learning materials, storytelling, and preparation of the teaching and learning environment.
(v)   Assessing the child's progress (p. 17)

The limited, but quickly developing, research on parental involvement in pre-primary education in Tanzania does not, however, focus on this part of the curriculum. Three academic papers published in high-ranking academic journals (Ndijuve, 2022; Ndijuve & Tandika, 2022; Edward et al., 2022) do not discuss the part of the curriculum that describes the possible ways of getting involved as a parent, but rather the parts where learning goals are described. Taking departure in the knowledge and abilities that the children shall become acquainted with during their education, like pre-reading skills (Edward et al., 2022) or general school performance (Ndijuve & Tandika, 2022), tacitly constrains the parental involvement in home-based activities, which are understood by the parents as supporting the children's

learning. None of these studies explain why they do not measure the correlations of other forms of involvement in children's learning performance.

Such narrowing of the official sayings on parental involvement may risk under-representation of other parental voices. Interviews with refugee parents gathered in Tanzania as part of a joint research project by Ndijuve and me (Sadownik & Ndijuve, in press) discuss not only the parental need to support the children's learning and academic performance, but a need for diverse forms of contact, communication, and collaboration with the pre-primary class. Below, I quote some of the parental utterances found in this project. The first two refer to a fundamental way of getting involved that is about "seeing the children off to the pre-primary class":

> I need to know how safe she is. I need to know who her teachers are, and I even need to know what she eats at school. Look, as a parent, I must know everything about my child while she is away at school. Very unfortunate – and I tell you this is very unfortunate: she leaves early in the morning; she is nowhere to be seen for six hours and is in the hands of strangers. (…) I cannot see her off to school every day because I have to work, and I think teachers don't like to see all parents at school every morning; it would be chaos. (RM12_T)

The fact that seeing the children off to school is not appreciated by the pre-primary class also appears in the next utterance:

> We are from a war-torn country; we are former child soldiers; we were abducted and forced to fight, so sometimes our past experiences make us feel insecure about our child's safety on the way to school. I wish the school allowed us to see off our children in person. (RF1_T)

I interpret these two quotes as demonstrating a need for knowing and understanding the school better and for the possibility for communication with teachers, which seem to be related to point (ii) from the curriculum on volunteering in school developmental activities. The next parental utterance refers to a lack of involvement in decision-making processes while "having something to say":

> We (*immigrant parents*) do not have much say in what children learn and how. That's for teachers and other authorities to decide. But at least we have more understanding about our children than them (teachers), so they need to regularly consult us. In Burundi, we were always consulted on various issues, especially during joint meetings with parents and the school.

However, because of *relatings,* the "we" – that may either relate to being a parent, or a migrant parent – even though emerging in the practice architecture, is not mirrored in the material-economic dimension of activity and work (regardless of being mentioned in the curriculum). Making these parental voices heard may have a potential influence on further researchers' sayings, whose research practice seems to follow their own practice tradition, built on a tacit assumption that the acquisition of knowledge and skills can be supported only by home's providing analogical activities to school. In such a case, as published by Edward et al. (2022), many parents do not seem to be knowledgeable enough (p. 28). Some of the teachers' responses quoted in Edward et al. (2022) put it as follows:

> Many parents here are not ensuring that their children attend school and learn as required, primarily because they do not know about teaching children. They do not follow up on children's school progress. (pp. 28–29)

Here, there are many challenges lowering and preventing children's [effective] acquisition of different skills including Kiswahili pre-reading skills… Parents do not encourage their children to attend school because they leave them with home responsibilities like taking care of their young children. (p. 29)

The understandings of a "good parent" and "parental involvement" resting behind these *sayings* of the teacher constitute the architecture of parental involvement. This is a very narrow and tight architecture of parental involvement that many parents do not fit and thus must "drop out" from. By spotting the constraints of the teachers' sayings, practice architecture theory allows us to think about how to challenge such sayings and practice traditions and to extend the possible ways for parents to become involved with their child's school. These are ways in which the parental resources and competencies would be sufficient to participate and in line with other *sayings* (i.e., the curriculum).

Because of the wider social *relatings* connected to poverty, socio-economic inequalities, and parental level of education, the parents do not have an equal basis from which to understand the practice and value of pre-primary education; thus, they do not have the same opportunities to support their children. Therefore, extending the possible *doings* of getting involved could allow the parents to participate and possibly develop a solidarity-like relation to the school or other dispositions, allowing new ways of supporting their children's education to emerge.

Kemmis et al. (2014) clearly state that participation in diverse practices develops diverse dispositions among individuals, which they, after Bourdieu, call *habitus* (p. 60, 78, 186, 248). Changing parental dispositions is thus dependent on their participation in the pre-primary class, which is why extending the terms of involvement so that very diverse families and parents can experience being a part of the parental community in caring for their children's lives and futures needs to come first.

Ideas of how to extend/transform pre-school-based involvement, which are further developed in Chap. 11 on posthumanism, also seem to be relevant here. For instance, there is the idea of forming a parental choir, or participating in joint cleaning endeavours, fixing toys and materials, or preparing food or meals (see Chap. 11). It is worth researching whether making the pre-primary school more open and familiar to parents, especially those of the parents who are classified as providing "unsupportive home learning environments" (Edward et al. 2022, p. 29), could change their understanding of and experience with education and transform home practices. Even in saying this, I am aware of how far away, both discursively and culturally, I am from the Tanzanian sites of pre-primary classes and research. This means that there are layers of complex *relatings* that I do not even know about, which may make my suggestions impossible or even ridiculous. However, I believe that challenging the Anglo-Saxon tradition of school readiness (Bennet, 2010) as the central focus of pre-school-family collaboration, could be a new *relating* of a decolonising character.

The complex perspective of practice architectures provides space and a conceptual toolkit to holistically reflect on the practice of parental involvement and, at the same time, encourages deeper exploration into, for example, *saying*s generated by different and differently *related* actors in the field, as they are entwined in

asymmetric power and solidarity relations, which opens up and constrains pathways for the possible doings.

Parental Involvement: Doings Anchored in Material-Economic Arrangements and Relatings

The fact that material-economic arrangements and access to diverse resources have a lot to do with making different doings possible (or not) is well known in the ECEC world. In the process of tracing human collective practices, Kemmis et al. (2014) suggest that the question of "What are you doing?" is better than "What do you have the resources for?" Starting with the first question allows us to depict the person's project/aim with a practice, and thus dig deeper into the discursive, economic, and social conditions for the activity.

A study by Kampichler (2021, 2022) conducted in the Czech Republic is an interesting example of a way of asking these questions of parents and pre-school staff at six different sites in one city in the Czech Republic. Specifically, Kampichler asks about practices and the reasons for them, which allows her to draw certain conclusions about the parents' and teachers' rationalities. Even though she does not use practice architecture for theorisation, this theory can be used to describe and explain the findings, as the research design and the gathered material fit the dimensions of practice architecture. What is so interesting and relevant about this study's design is that the ECEC settings that were part of the research represent a wide context of socio-political and economic *relatings*, which turn out to be a differentiating criterion for the happening doings between ECEC and parents, even though they are anchored in the same *sayings* of the *Czech* curriculum for pre-school education, as well as the EU anchored, "Strategy for the Education Policy of the Czech Republic Up to 2030+" (Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, 2020).

As the ECEC market developed rapidly after the socio-political transformation in 1989 (from socialism to liberal democracy and capitalism), which transformed homogenous state-socialistic centres into a diverse array of private and public settings, the following ECEC settings were chosen for the study:

> We used purposive sampling to choose 6 ECEC facilities for our interviews: we selected three public facilities, with high, medium, and low parental demand (based on the number of applications per place offered), and three private facilities offering their services at high, medium, and low prices (in the context of our city for research). (Kampichler, 2021, p. 253)

As Kampichler (2022) describes, in the public high-demand facility, the possible parental *doings* represented a very wide spectrum of activities, including meetings before the child's start in the facility, an adaptation period tailored to the needs of the child and the family, regular parental conferences and the availability for spontaneous talk, the possibility of joining the child for the day in the pre-school, and several events during the year for both parents and children (e.g., common work in the facility's garden). Moreover, the parents were encouraged to organise

self-initiated events in the building of the service, such as a sleepover for all the children.

While this public facility opened the arena to doings for the parents, the high-price facility was more focused on satisfying the wishes of the customer: the parent. A lot of information in the form of videos, pictures, and stories was shared with the parents through social media, a pie chart mapping the child's development and progress in different areas was systematically updated, and the ECE offered an array of extracurricular developmental activities, thus "releasing" the parents from their duties.

In the public medium-demand facility, the collaboration between parents and the ECE mainly occurred through daily talks and 2–3 annual events (i.e., Christmas, Easter, and the end of the school year) in the setting. There were no regular conferences, and the staff complained about the parents' low interest in being involved and ceding their educational work on the institution.

The lack of parental interest was, however, not an issue in the medium-cost private facility, which was a forest pre-school, where parental involvement was a demand. Each family was responsible for one task during the whole week, such as providing water for the whole group. The importance of parental involvement was highlighted in the settings' communication of values (sayings), the spatial arrangements providing room for parents' presence, and the possibility of meeting other parents during the ECE day.

The low-price public setting, analogous to the medium-demand public one, struggled with a low parental interest in involvement; however, they also had very engaged parents. This may be because the facility offered the continuous possibility for teacher–parent interviews and tutorials.

In all these settings mentioned above, the practice of parental involvement was emerging out of the ECEC's arrangement with the parents, who saw themselves as active co-creators of the education and care offered to their children (as in the forest pre-school), or as customers "outsourcing" their parental responsibilities through competent experts. Such a choice of one's own role and way of collaborating with the ECE setting was, however, not available for the parents in the public, low-demand facility located near an excluded Roma neighbourhood. In this public setting, the official sayings of ECEC being a remedy for social inequalities, which led to *doings* focused on the families' lacks and compensating for them. In the teacher's stories, the Roma mothers lacked basic knowledge about their children's needs, the equipment necessary for the children in the facility, and the basic attitudes needed in life (Kampichler, 2021). These deficiencies constituted the starting points for the ECEC's work (*doings*) with the families. As one of the interviewed teachers put it,

C6: [H]ere they learn self-reliance, responsibility, and taking responsibility. Yeah, you just need this for life here, and they need that especially… (Kampichler, 2021, p. 257)

When analysing the sayings surrounding such lack-compensating and inequality-mitigating *doings*, Kampichler (2021, 2022) asked about the excluding terms on which the practice of "inclusion" is founded:

What does it actually mean for the children and their parents? Do we talk about equalizing opportunities to fulfill the child's individual potential or rather normalizing and assimilating children and their parents into pre-defined paths? (Kampichler, 2021, p. 70, original emphases)

What this implies is that the researcher's sayings are based on an understanding of the deeper socio-economic, asymmetric *relatings* that, together with cultural-discursive arrangements, allow the ECEC staff to *do* in the parental involvement by limiting the parental agency and influence regarding child-rearing ideas or individual notions of parental involvement. In that sense, the research *sayings* challenge and stimulate critical reflection over *doings* (of an assimilating character)*,* especially when the official sayings on providing all children with equal opportunities, regardless of their individual characteristics and needs, are implemented in *relation* to a socially unprivileged group. As I understand Kampichler to be saying (2021, 2022), she would support the idea of extending the arena of possible doings connected to parental involvement (different examples of which are presented in Chaps. 10 and 11), so that different groups could be met and seen not only through their lacks, but also through their resources and strengths.

Both the examples from Tanzania and the Czech Republic show how the ECEC settings' practice of collaborating with parents becomes the practice architecture of their involvement. In some cases, a very wide and flexible architecture may be apparent (like for the middle-class parents securing spots in a high-demand public ECEC or a high-priced private one in the Czech Republic), or there may be very limited agency from the parental side, whereby the parents either do what they are expected to, or "drop out" from involvement. In the latter case, the critical sayings of research, which trouble the assimilation-like doings, are of great importance.

Summary

The theory of practice architectures is an interesting contribution, as it allows us to re-think the theoretisation of more-than-parental involvement in early childhood education as a practice. This theory's sensitivity and moving towards each practice's complexity and contextuality embraces the aspects of more-than-parental involvement highlighted in Chap. 1. Its focus on practice and not particular social actors allows it to embrace diverse family and caregivers' configurations around the child. The agonistic, conflict-valuing aspect flows into this theory through the tension and dynamic tension between the *sayings*, *doings* and *relatings*.

Specifically, this theory allows us to unpack the complexity of parental involvement, as well as its constituting cultural-discursive, material-economic, and socio-political arrangements, and thus to realise that what is communicated in the *sayings* of official documents may be *done* very differently in diverse sites (both the sites of countries, as well as the sites of the same city, as shown through the examples used in this chapter), depending on *relatings*. Moreover, the theory allows us to understand different practices in ecologies and co-dependencies upon one another.

Nevertheless, it also allows us to justify the conscious decision of looking at "just" the sayings, or "just" the doings, if there is limited time for research. The complexity of practice that the theory of practice architectures allows us to capture and reflect over is its definite advantage. The operationalisation of what can be classified as cultural-discursive, material-economic, or socio-political content in the case of a particular site is up to the researcher applying the theory. On the one hand, this opens up pathways for local and contextual adjustments, but on the other hand, it may lead to the three dimensions of practice architecture, not always being explained with ontologically or epistemologically compatible concepts (depending on how the theory is applied).

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Chapter 10
Theories of Discourse (on Quality) and Narrative Inquiry

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Abstract The chapter discusses the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe (Hegemony and socialist strategy: towards a radical democratic politics. Verso, 1985) and relates it to conceptualisations of ECEC quality as a process of meaning-making (Dahlberg et al., Beyond quality in early childhood education and care: languages of evaluation. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203371114, 2013) and narrative inquiry that theorises human experience as a story. Such a conceptualisation allows us to look at more-than-parental involvement as a never-ending process of meaning-making that manoeuvres between reproducing and challenging the established hegemonies of meaning and communication channels. The included empirical example comes from a quality development project run by an ECEC setting in a multicultural neighbourhood in Norway.

Keywords Discourse · Hegemony · Narrative · Quality

Discourse Theory

According to Laclau and Mouffe (1985), a discourse is a set of meanings pretending to occupy the status of truth by launching their own vision of a phenomenon (or the world) as the only possible one, and thus silently excluding other possibilities of meaning. To explain how such a hegemonising work of discourse takes place, the authors focus on the level of the signifier and signified. Meaning-making happens when a signifier connects with multiple signified. What the discourse does is pick up one of these meanings and present it as the only possible one – as a total one, and as truth. This can be illustrated with the signifier *child*, which can be signified by many different descriptions, including a human becoming, an adult-dependant, an

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egocentric entity, a subject, an investment, an actor in one's own life, an owner of one's own rights, a relative, a friend, and so on. When the powers of discourse enter such a *field of discursivity* (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), they select one of the many possible meanings and "freeze it" as the only possible one – as the absolute and total sense. For example: a child as an adult-dependent human becoming. The work of discourse always aims at a totality of meaning (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985), which is why it presents the stabilised/frozen meaning as the one and only truth.

The fact that this "truth" is produced through the exclusion of all other signified possibilities is not articulated by the discourse. The ideal position for a discourse is to never be questioned or discussed, but to exist as the "natural and received shape of the world" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 1991, p. 23), one that goes without saying, even though it is constructed and historically contingent. What weakens the dominance of discourse is the articulation of the meanings that were excluded when the discourse was stabilised. They constitute a *surplus of meaning* (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) that, from the standpoint of discourse, is dangerous, as it threatens its hegemony; however, from the standpoint of democracy, this surplus is crucial (Mouffe, 2005).

The articulation of neglected and marginalised meanings challenges the taken-for-granted status of one or another (often privileged) discourse. Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) theory of discourse is based on the intention to serve and maintain democracy, and so they search for a concept capable of embracing the continuous motion of meanings, never allowing any of the discourses to reach the status of hegemony. This is why they argue against the concept of consensus. They say consensus hides existing alternatives of meaning and creates a dangerous illusion of agreement (while we are not agreeing). Laclau and Mouffe (1985) propose then *agonism*:

> While antagonism is a we/they relation in which the sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, *agonism* is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents. They are "adversaries" not enemies. (Mouffe, 2005, p. 20)

The peaceful presence of conflicting meanings requires a "common symbolic space" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 52) that enables all the different meanings to recognise each other as "legitimate enemies" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 52). As such, rather than excluding each other, these meanings acknowledge each other's constitutive roles in society and the community.

In social and political life, as well as in the social practice of more-than-parental involvement in ECEC, such a "common symbolic space" may be easily "faked" by an illusion of polyvocality. According to Ewick and Silbey (1995), the same set of meanings being repeated in many stories of many human beings (usually originating from very similar social positions) may create an illusion of polyvocality and thus strengthen rather than challenge the dominant narrative. For example, many parental stories on their very diverse experience with ECEC of their children can strengthen the dominant narrative that young children shall attend ECEC services. No matter how different the parental experience is, the other voice – of a parent

whose children do not attend ECEC – is excluded. Furthermore, regardless many parental voices being included, there was only one story ("my child attends ECEC") that was told.

Nevertheless, identifying alternative discourses and the differences between them is not always an easy task. As they remain in complex relations with each other, the discourses may create chains of equivalence and difference (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Conflicting discourses may become equivalent, not because of their own meaning, but because of disagreement about another phenomenon. This means that equivalence (or the illusion of it) is created in relation to a third party, or a "joint enemy" (Mouffe, 2005, p. 50). Such a coalition of meanings based on their joint opposition may create a sense of similarity. For instance, all the above-mentioned possible discourses about the *child* could resemble each other in their joint disagreement with involving children as soldiers in armed conflicts.

The example of the signifier *child* is, however, also quite special in our historical context. As a signifier, it seems to be a floating over very different chains of meaning, and it may therefore mean something else entirely in different social, cultural, and political settings. However, in the (con)text of one particular document, which is the Convention of the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989), the child floats over two chains of meaning: one in which the child is dependent on adult care, advocacy, and representation, and the other where he or she is an independent subject, rights owner, and social actor with his or her own voice. Such a presentation of the child blurs the opposition and tension between the opposite set of meanings and thus does not allow for any discussion or authentic confrontation with the other meaning (Biesta, 2004).

Narrative Inquiry: A Theory and Method Preventing a One-Story Monopoly

Narrative scholarship as a research tradition has always been aware of the danger of one (and only one) story. The approach of giving others a voice and "allowing the silenced to speak" is itself a way of "rewriting social life in ways that are, or can be, liberatory" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 199). Seeing the story as inseparable from the experience, constituted at the particular intersection of social, cultural, institutional, and geographical circumstances, makes stories and listening to them a unique portal into other people's worlds. The inseparable dynamics of the individual and the context can lead to the recollection of diverse elements while the stories are told and re-told across different settings, places, or groups. The story's relation to its own context is dialectical, which means that the stories are both constituted by and constitutive of the social, spatial, or institutional contexts within which they emerge, including their power relations. While individual experiences are constituted, shaped, expressed, and enacted by their contexts (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 42), it is simultaneously the individual experience/story itself that can challenge the

context and unmask the power relations underpinning it. In particular, the stories of experienced discrimination have the potential to unmask the unjust power relations and biases underpinning certain institutions and practices.

However, in the case of narrative inquiry, the story also has an intrinsic value that is not necessarily connected to the process of challenging the power relations underlying our existence; instead, this value encourages our understanding and sharing of our very (un)like experiences of the world. Narrative inquiry thus understands the human experience as a "storied phenomenon" (Clandinin et al., 2016, p. 11). As Connelly and Clandinin (2006) put it,

> People shape their daily lives through stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story … is the portal through which a person enters the world and by which their experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful. (p. 477)

Experience, then, is "a conscious interaction of human thought with our personal, social, and material environment" (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007, p. 39), which is "lived in the midst, as always unfolding over time, in diverse social contexts and in place, and as co-composed in relation" (Caine et al., 2013, p. 575). Again, the inseparable dynamics of the individual and the context can facilitate the recollection of diverse elements while the stories are told and re-told across different settings, places, or groups.

Telling and re-telling one's own story and one's own experience also prevents the hegemony of such a perspective. This hegemony can be challenged by any of the three dimensions that constitute narrative inquiry: temporality, place, and sociality (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). Temporality permits the re-telling of a story at different times in one's own life or others' lives. Those "others" who are somehow involved in our story constitute the dimension of sociality. The people to whom we and our stories are related can make their own stories, through which our stories are re-told, or which inspire us to reshape and/or re-tell our stories. As people and experiences are not only created within a culture and society but also have a spatial and material anchoring, Clandinin and Connelly (2000) refer to a place as a constative aspect of narrative inquiry. Places inspire and influence relationships between people (sociality), and these relationships shape places over time (temporality). The dynamics between these three dimensions create the basis for narrative inquiry's sensitivity to and respect for all the (sometimes contradictory) stories of all the individuals (and places) involved in a particular experience.

Response-Able S*haring* of Stories

Sharing different stories of the experiences that constitute us as human beings is related to Biesta's (2004, 2006) *other community*, consisting of "those who have nothing in common", but who become a community through a genuine openness for the other's story and by confronting the otherness through authentic questions. The

other community provides space for individual, unique, and authentic voices, as this community, in opposition to the rational community, does not expect any common logic, language, or representative voice:

> This further implies that the voice with which you speak to the one with whom you have nothing in common is not a borrowed or representative voice, but has to be your own voice and no one else's. (Biesta, 2004, p. 316)

Even discourse theories deny the possibility of one's "own voice", instead suggesting that subjectivities are constructed upon the accidental intersections of diverse discourses (Foucault, 1988) that are not "our voices"; these constructions are still unique and locked into a continuous becoming through the process of responding to others:

> What constitutes our subjectivity, what constitutes us in our subjectivity, is the way in which we - you and I as singular beings - respond. We may want to call this our response-ability. (Biesta, 2004, p. 322)

Biesta imposes the notion of response-ability, which is understood as facilitating the other community of unique voices and respectful answers, on educators and educational systems. This response-ability is then about answering (as it can never be taken for granted that an answer will come). Response-ability is also "not about what we already know. Respons-ability excludes and opposes calculation" (Biesta, 2004, p. 322). It is about being genuinely open to the uncertainty that comes when we "expose ourselves to what is other and different" (Biesta, 2004, p. 322), even if it can be difficult and painful.

Such an understanding of good, responsive education is in line with Dahlberg et al.'s (2013) conceptualisations of quality as meaning-making, which involves very diverse perspectives of all the more-than-parental actors who have their *part* in ECEC.

Quality as Meaning-Making

In their deconstruction of quality, Dahlberg et al. (2013) unmask the concept as "not a neutral word" (p. 92), but a discourse – a hegemony of meaning based on the exclusion of other alternatives (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Founded on the groundwork of positivistic assumptions about objective truth, this idea of quality is intended to discover and provide universally good standards for all human lives. With such origins, the concept of quality, even though socially constructed, is often presented as neutral or independent of the local context or individual judgement and capable of being identified by specific measures.

To resist the discourse on quality as an objective phenomenon, Dahlberg et al. (2013) build on postmodern ontology "with knowledge of the world understood to be 'socially constituted, historically embedded and valuationally based'" (Lather, 1991, p. 53 in Dahlberg et al., 2013, p. 24), what again creates a base for acknowledgement of 'perspectival realities' (Gergen, 1990). When transposing the

postmodern ontology onto work with quality, Dahlberg et al. highlight also the importance of creating an arena for sharing the perspectives (perceptions, values, and views) on good education and good lives for our children; and thus exposing each other to an *other* meaning. Similar to Biesta (2004), they argue for authentic questions and answers about issues that we truly care about, like, for example, "What do we want for our children? What is a good childhood?" (Dahlberg et al., 2013, p. 114). They relate such practices to situated meaning-making, where, from shared perspectives, new ones can be created, sensitive and relevant for the local context. They also, however, encourage reflexive thinking and the process of asking about the conditions for the appearance of diverse meanings, deconstruction, and problematisation. Including the perspectives of more-than-parents, ECEC staff, children, and owners is seen as constitutive for meaning-making and an invitation for the participation of more "wise people, drawn from a range of backgrounds and experience, including pedagogical work and philosophy" (p. 114). Including so diverse actors and stakeholders – with potentially very different perspectives and experiences – shall protect from an illusion of polyvocality (Ewick and Silbey, 1995) and open up for diverse logics and modes of communication.

The creation of such dialogues also requires respect and "sensitivity to hear others' voices, the ability to see the Other as equal but different and the capacity to reverse perspectives" (Benhabib, 1992 in Dahlberg et al., 2013, p. 114). In relation to more-than-parental involvement, this process requires not only the ethics of professionals, but also openness and respect among the parents. This perspective is anchored in the Western concept of dialogue as "the right" setting and way of sharing diverse meanings, but at the same time creates a spaces where not only representative voices of rational community members can be articulated (Biesta, 2004). The example presented below shows, however, how easily the western understanding of (rational) dialogue as the best strategy to let the parents articulate their meanings, can unintentionally exclude a wide range of voices and expressions.

"When We Wanted to Talk, They Kept Quiet. When We Organised a Dinner Party, They Sang and Danced"

This empirical example is based on a story written by one ECEC teacher, who led a developmental project on collaboration with parents and caregivers. The focus of the quality development project was to increase the experienced quality of the daily meetings between the children and the staff during the dropping-off and picking-up of the children. The ECEC setting was located in the centre of a Norwegian city and was attended by children from diverse cultural and lingual backgrounds. Over 75% of the families were of im/migrant and refugee backgrounds. Aware of the different meanings associated with a good drop-off of pick-up, the ECEC decided to ask the parents about their perspectives:

In advance of the meeting, we arranged for translators of all the languages represented by the families. We also asked parents who spoke Norwegian well to translate during the meeting. Having made sure that every family would understand and be able to articulate their own meanings, we asked them how they perceived the picking-up and dropping-off situations. They were supposed to work in groups (52 parents made 7 groups), and one of the parents or one of us would write down the answers on a big piece of paper. We should have got 7 papers filled with parental meanings but we got 5 empty papers back; on one, "it's fine" was written, and the third, written by Norwegian parents, was full of positive feedback and suggestions for improvements, both in terms of the organisation of the interior and the attitudes and activities of the staff.

When we asked the groups about their conclusions, the ethnic Norwegian parents told us about the process of discussion and meaning exchange, while the other 6 groups said that it was nice to meet others, but that they do not have any other opinion about picking-up at dropping-off, than "it's fine".

How did it happen that, with the best intentions of having a dialogue, we excluded the majority of "our parents"? This was the question we kept sitting with. We couldn't understand what was wrong. We did everything so perfectly and professionally.

Two weeks later, we celebrated United Nations Day and invited all the parents to dinner. "Bring food that you like to eat for dinner" was on the invitation. I couldn't believe my eyes when I saw all the families coming from all over the neighbourhood to our kindergarten. Many had traditional clothes on them. They brought all family members, even if we assumed only the parents and kindergarten children would come. There was so much food being brought that we needed to bring extra tables. The families were talking, singing, and even dancing. The inside and outside of the kindergarten were filled with singing and laughter. We learned several African dances and tried over 100 dishes of different origins. The children were playing inside and outside, and we stayed two hours longer than we had expected. "It was the best day", said one father to me the next morning. None of the parental suggestions for improving picking-up and dropping-off situations were written down. None even mentioned it. It was the best day.

ECEC teacher

This story from practice shows how the discourse on ECEC collaboration with families, which assumed that dialogue and group work would be the best communication channels, narrowed down the possible ways of being and articulating one's own meanings. The meeting during which parental opinions were supposed to be articulated, discussed, and written down turned out to be structured as a *rational community* operating with a particular code, who perceived and valued discussions of such details of ECEC institutional practice like picking-up and dropping-off the children. The group work and process of writing things down probably even strengthened the Western framework of the meeting. It functioned well for parents who were socialised within such culture of dialogue and shared the same assumptions about collaboration and meaning exchange (as systematic, rational, and summed up with notes).

The less formal setting of the dinner party, with the only written rule being to "bring the food you like to eat for dinner", allowed the families to interpret the activity on their own cultural terms and contribute with their own premises and understandings. The dinner as a social setting was open to interpretation as an event for all family members (even though the ECEC staff thought only about the parents); the word *party* was associated with music, dressing up, and dancing. The combination of words *dinner – party*, allowed the families to come with their

vibrancies of lingual, artistic, emotional, cultural, spiritual, and ethic resources (McKee et al., 2022) and *flourish* (Ejuu & Opiyo, 2022) – as all the resources were valued by everyone who was there.

It was a community of those who had nothing in common. One thing that some families had in common was the war between their countries of origin (which was the reason for both being war refugees in Norway). The food, music, and traditional clothing created an entanglement in which the expression of one's own voice was possible and felt safe. The children saw their parents talking and dancing together, and they could all try the food, dances, and music of all the other cultures that were there. *None of the parental suggestions for improving picking-up and dropping-off situations were written down. None even mentioned it. It was the best day.*

This story from practice challenges the pre-assumptions of narratives as word-based and offers an agonistic understanding of the process as not strictly verbal but organic. The example from the ECEC teacher's story extends the situated meaning-making suggested by Dahlberg et al. (2013) to more than words and fills the "common symbolic space" (Mouffe, 2005) with non-verbal signs and signifiers. It also once more confirms that "allowing the silenced to speak" is a process of "rewriting social life in ways that are, or can be, liberatory" (Ewick & Silbey, 1995, p. 199); it is just essential to remember that "speaking" may signify very different ways of communication and expression.

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Chapter 11
Posthumanism: Intra-active Entanglements of Parental Involvement (as a Possibility of Change-Making)

Alicja R. Sadownik (iD)

Abstract This chapter begins with a presentation of posthumanism/agential realism as a theoretical perspective entangling with early childhood education and care (ECEC), and as an ethical project, crucial for sustainable futures of all earthlings. After presenting the key concepts of Barad (Meeting the universe halfway: quantum physics and the entanglement of matter and meaning. Duke University Press, 2007), to whom the theoretical perspective of agential realism can be attributed, I try to show how the practice of parental involvement, usually understood as a human–human phenomenon, can be challenged and enhanced with this theoretical anchoring. The empirical example described further in the chapter, shows how ECEC staff in one kindergarten in Norway became empowered by this theoretical perspective to try out a different way of arranging a parental meeting. The chapter concludes by pointing to the necessity of theories that empower the vibrant intuitions of ECEC teachers and encourage them to try out new (more-than-human) ways of improving the institutional practices.

Keywords Agential realism · Inspiring change · Posthumanism · Parental meeting

Posthumanism Entangling Early Childhood Education

The recent explosion of posthumanism-inspired studies and publications in the field of early childhood education and care (ECEC) signals that posthumanism has found its place in the field. Specifically, posthumanism has troubled the established substance ontology and offered new, radically relational foundations for knowledge and knowing (Murris & Osgood, 2022). In the posthuman encounter with early childhood education, new ways of knowing regard the child and childhood. Taking

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departure from the intra-active ontology that explains how human existence is constituted in the complexity of intra-actions/relations to the diverse human and nonhuman elements around us (Barad, 2007), posthumanism offers re-figuration(s) of the child as a subject (Lindgren, 2020; Murris, 2016). In "thinking-with theory as an analytic process to make sense of a world" (Murris & Osgood, 2022, p. 216), the theory enables us to see the child as inseparable from her surroundings, continuously entangled and both constituted and "dissolving" (Hackett et al., 2020a, b, p. 6) in the surroundings. As Hackett et al. (2020a, b) put it:

> The boundaries we imagine between a human body and the rest of the world - a layer of impermeable skin and brain locked safely away from harm inside a skull - are just that, imaginary. Instead, bodies of humans and non-humans are leaky, porous; we take in experiences, ideas, feelings and physical substances and, simultaneously, all these leak out of us. (p. 82)

The radically relational lens employed in the observation of the child can be interpreted as a way of coming closer to how the child experiences herself in the world and the world in herself. The inseparability of the child and her (un)living, (non) human surroundings from other earthlings allows us to see the child as more-than-human and continuously constituted in/through interaction.

Intra-action is not an interaction between two subjects/objects who exist prior to the interaction. According to Murris (2018), "Barad's neologism intra-action ruptures the familiar concept of 'interaction'" (p. 40), as it underlines that the intra-acting bodies constitute each other's existence through and in intra-action, and thus do not exist prior to the relation between them (Barad, 2007). The impression of continuity in our existence is always founded in one or another intra-action being there, as we live in "a dynamic and shifting entanglement of relations" (Barad, 2007, p. 204), or, as Haraway (2016, p. 58) puts it, in a sympoiesis. Sympoiesis "is a simple word, it means 'making with,'" and, as being constituted in our relations to everything else, each of us is a being-with, making-with, and thinking-with (Murris, 2018).

According to Barad (2007), the radicality of this relationality is anchored in quantum physics experiments, leading to the conclusion of the human and non-human belonging to the same matter. This is visible at the level of electrons – particles that are so small that they do not owe us any spatiality. These particles vibrating in and out of our bodies, being both a part of us and outside of us, unmask the illusion of diverse dichotomic classifications, such as nature-culture, subjectivity-objectivity, and body-mind. We are all the same matter – the matter of nature, the matter of spacetime, the matter of subjectivity, the matter of solidarity, and the matter of politics and the economy – entangled together, unfolding together, and constituting each other's existence and bearing mutual responsibility for it.

Such an ontology of the human(child) allows us to see the child as "ontologically completed" (Malone et al., 2020, p. 42) and overcome an epistemic injustice implied in either silencing them or assuming "that they are (still) developing, (still) innocent, (still) fragile, (still) immature, (still) irrational, (still) becoming" (Murris, 2018, p. 2). Meeting the child as an intra-active being-with arguably allows us to

come closer to the child's experience as it is and the child's knowing, and to meet the child as she is emerging in the diverse and dynamic entanglements she intra-acts with.

Another feature that comes to matter in these entangled human(child) intra-actions is vibrancy, which refers to "a more-than-human atmospheric force (…) operating upon bodies from without" (Bennet, 2020, p. 29). As a political theorist, Bennet (2010) focuses her analysis on the nonhuman forces actively participating in the doing of politics, but her approach may still inspire the perception of the "vibrant materiality" flowing though and across bodies. This vibrancy is not only a sentiment, but rather an affect, or a more-than-feeling that emerges in-between bodies. As such, vibrancy could be either benevolent or non-benevolent (Bennet, 2020). Following up on the vibrant matter, Bennet (2020) describes circuits of sympathy through which diverse feelings, such as love, care, pain, and suffering, can transfer across living bodies. Such circuits allow one to feel with-the-other body and depict both non-benevolent and benevolent forces. Vibrancy exists no matter whether it is perceived or not, as it is an earthly and natural power "rooted as deeply as the geologic of gravity" (Bennet, 2020, p. 43).

Posthumanism as an Ethical Project

Posthumanism is not only an ontology; it is also an ethics. The constitutive interdependence through which we all come to be implies an ethical responsibility for each other's existence. Another neologism of Barad's (2007), the idea of an "ethico-onto-epistemology – an appreciation of the intertwining of ethics, knowing, and being" (p. 185), indicates that, as we are entangled together in the "world-body space" (p. 185), we are responsible for each other. We, as more-than-human earthlings, not only constituting each other's being but are organically responsible for each other.

This organic responsibility is something we, as all earthlings, desperately need in the times of the Anthropocene:

> These times called the Anthropocene are times of multispecies, including human, urgency: of great mass death and extinction; of onrushing disasters, whose unpredictable specificities are foolishly taken as unknowability itself; of refusing to know and to cultivate the capacity of response-ability; of refusing to be present in and to onrushing catastrophe in time; of unprecedented looking away. (Haraway, 2016, p. 35)

What the Anthropocene is looking away from, refusing to admit, and becoming response-able to is the "sympoiesis" (Haraway, 2016, p. 58), in which all earthlings are beings-with, existings-with, knowings-with, and responsibilings-with. "Humans are intra-actively (re)constituted as a part of the world's becoming" (Barad, 2007, p. 206), which also means that "human practices are agentive participants in the world's intra-active becoming" (p. 207). This explains why "we are responsible not only for the knowledge that we seek but, in part, for what exists" (p. 207). Our agency, according to Barad (2007), lies in the intra-actions we are a part of, and

these intra-actions bring forth the possibility of change when they cut together-apart (p. 179). The cutting together-and-apart escalates some connections and deescalates others. In Barad's (2007) words, "we are responsible for the cuts that we help to enact not because we do the choosing (neither do we escape responsibility because 'we' are 'chosen' by them), but because we are an agential part of the material becoming of the universe" (p. 178). Our ethics is thus about not responding to the other "as if the other is the radical outside of the self" (p. 178), but with great awareness that we, as co-constituted and entangled together, are never alone, and that the cuts coming from the in-between affect us all.

The interconnectedness, interdependence and equality in our existence seem, however, to also be "dissolving the human" (Hackett et al., 2020a, b, p. 6), a process that is discussed in terms of its ethical dangers and possibilities. Åsberg and Neimanis (2013) point out that the intention of seeing all bodies as equal can weaken the insight into hierarchical patterns underpinning reality. Unjust power and violence, as well as discrepancies in individual rights, can become invisible through the lens of equal ontology.

At the same time, the equal ontology implies a great political and ethical strategy, proving that seeing all bodies as co-constituted and co-responsible is possible and that a parity between species and all humans (including those humans who are disregarded as humans) is imaginable/achievable. Such an order to things immensely troubles the exploitative existence of privileged humans struggling to live more sustainable lives. The new perspective of all earthlings' intra-active co-existence offers a way towards sustainability that is not only happening at the level of "habits," but instead emerges as a way of thinking of our being-with the world and our mutually responsibility for each other's survival. Moreover, the onto-ethico-epistemological departure can bring our awareness back to re-imagining sustainability as a holistic project (as it originally was considered; see Purvis et al., 2019) and motivate us to re-join its ecological, economic, and social dimensions, which, when being cut-apart, obfuscated the originally holistic focus of sustainability (Sadownik & Gabi, 2021).

What About Parental Involvement?

How does all of this relate to parental involvement? As my systematic search of three databases resulted in no hits for the terms "parental involvement + posthumanism" or "parental engagement + posthumanism," I will spend some time here describing the potential of this theoretical approach for conceptualising the practice of parental involvement. I start with the relational character of being "a parent" and of the relevant sense of "involvement" (in ECEC). I will then discuss parental involvement as an intra-active matter and happening in/through different entanglements. My small research project is presented in the next section.

Figuring the parent through the radically relational ontology is quite interesting, as "a parent" or "a caregiver" is constituted through his/her relation to the child as

the caretaker. On the one hand, this means that it is the child(human), and relation to the child(human), that constitutes a human(adult) as a parent. On the other hand, this also implies the child's dependency, vulnerability, and need for care and parenting (Murris, 2013, 2018). However, the child's needs for closeness and care tangles the threads of parental life and re-figures it. Specifically, it re-figures the parents' relationship with the workplace and re-arranges the entanglement of the home and its economy. The parents' ways of spending their days and nights and their intra-actions with other humans and places are also cut together-apart. Cusk (2010) describes becoming a parent as the death of the person one used to be before having a child through the abandonment of activities and relations that were previously considered to be important. All of this happens as a response to the children's needs. In this way, parents are response-able, as Haraway (2016) would put it, as they realise and respond to the child's agency in the intra-action.

Our knowledge about children's abuse and traumas in the world does not allow us to state that the parent-child intra-action is always of a benevolent vibrancy (Bennett, 2020). However, the power of sympathy allows another human to feel with the abused child and create new response-able entanglements of care.

With the goal of showing the potential of posthumanism for re-thinking parental involvement, I will not go deeper into the abuse of power that can occur with the adult-child. Instead, I take their intra-action to be mutually response-able, with agency on both sides. This agency can enact and diminish the diverse intra-actions in which both parts are involved.

At some point in the trajectory of life, as the child participates in ECEC, the parents have the opportunity to entangle with the ECEC setting, and parental involvement can indeed take place through different entanglements. For example, the entanglement of volunteering, with its benevolent vibe of the parents intra-acting with the ECEC space and children, constitutes an event for everyone. There is the entanglement of digital communication, whereby the ECEC staff send important information through a communication app, and the parent is turned toward opening the app and reading the message. The entanglement of home where other children and parents come, visit and intra-act. There is also the entanglement of voting over celebrating children's birthdays with or without cake/sugar at a parental board meeting, and the entanglement initiated by an artist parent, who, by bringing forward new equipment, transforms the setting into an atelier where a bunch of young artists intra-act with brushes, canvas, and colours. All of these forms of involvement will enable different entanglements in different localities of the world's body, and I hope that each of the readers of this chapter will be able to describe another familiar form of parental engagement through the conceptual toolkit introduced here.

The reason for which I decided to include posthumanism in this book was the fact that it can inspire new, vibrant entanglements of parents' engagements or meetings with the ECEC staff. Posthumanism can be thought of as a practice that the practitioners were too shy to try, as the ideas may have sounded too crazy. These may be practices that the teachers intuitively felt were right and worth trying, but they lacked the professional language to justify the idea. Posthumanism, with its

relational ontology, allows the parents to come to matter in the ECEC through new entanglements. Two such possibilities are described in the study presented below.

Posthumanism as a Change-Empowering Toolkit: Empirical Notes

I will never forget how inspired I felt after being introduced to posthumanism at the ceremony for the grand opening of the Kindergarten Knowledge and Research Centre, where I currently work. On this occasion, Abigail Hackett was presenting her research on children in museums (Hackett, 2019). This lecture affected me very much. It diffracted me to another orbit of thinking about myself with the world, my mothering, my research and teaching practice, and my hobby of ice-swimming. It redefined my thinking of my entangled self and re-figured my teaching and research practice, which became slowly diffracted to a more posthuman realm.

The strong affect pressed me to share the inspirational conceptual toolkit with others, with the hope that it would empower me to enact new practices. The first time I shared this theoretical approach was during my lecture on Inspirational Day[1] (Sadownik, 2021). After this theoretical approach was briefly presented, the ECEC teachers from different kindergartens were assigned the task of coming up with several ideas for parental meetings that this toolkit made them think of. Around 30 participants worked in groups of six and together developed the following ideas for parental meetings. The groups underlined that this theoretical approach confirmed their intuitions that the parental meetings do not need to be of a very formal kind, and that they can take place more often. In the more-than-human groups entangled with thoughts, paper, and ink, the following ideas were written down:

– A choir. Parental choirs or meetings with parents and children where we just sing and allow the sound waves to connect us.
– Allowing parents to experience the same entanglement in which their children are involved on a daily basis. Parents can sit by the activity tables and play with some toys, games, and natural materials, as the children do. The parents can also intra-act with the materials differently and make/create some toys and musical instruments together for the children.
– Food making, or a meal could be held at a bonfire.
– Making music or art together; creating LANDart or a puzzle of ourselves.
– Transforming the room with materials, like pillows and blankets, which would give the parents the sensation of cosiness and comfort, and not one of a formal meeting.

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[1] Inspirational Day consists of a four-hour-long set of diverse invited lectures that the migration pedagogues from the Agency for Kindergarten in Bergen City organize for kindergartens. This is considered a platform through which diversity-related knowledge could be found to be inspiring and useful.

– Arranging activities for children so that many more families can come.
– Less serious content of the meeting; let's talk, let's sing, and let's be together and see what happens.
– Many little tables, with tea and cookies, and a little tea party for the parents with informal talks.
– Coming together to clean, reorganise the space, and fix some toys inside and on the outdoor playground.

The ideas about the choir, music making, singing, and "allowing the sound waves to connect us" match to a great degree with existing posthuman research on sound as an affect (Gallagher, 2016), and literacy as emerging from vibrational entanglements of sound-making and "listening geographies" (Gallagher et al., 2017, p. 618). The teachers clearly understood the agency of all kinds of materiality and suggested exploring the potential of sound in parental meetings. However, acknowledgement of the agential role of diverse material bodies was present in all the unfolded ideas (which I had a strong desire to follow up on with further research).

Co-creating an Entanglement for a Parental Meeting

Shortly after the Inspiration Day, I was contacted by one of the oldest kindergartens in Bergen, where the staff were currently working on intertwining the kindergarten's history and past into the daily pedagogy. As they experienced that they were succeeding in entangling the children with the past, they wanted to focus on how this could be made possible with parents:

> With the children, it's easy. We go to the basement. It's full of old toys. We close the door, we lock it, and one of says, and now we are locked in the past… and it starts, the children go around, touch the old toys… they play as 200 years ago. We are wondering how it can be useful for our meetings with parents. (Headmaster)

In response to this request, I conducted a 2-h workshop for five educational leaders working in the kindergarten. The workshop took place in May 2022 and comprised a short presentation of the core concepts of new materialism and the staff's brainstorming on forms for parental meetings that this toolkit inspired them to try out.

The new materialistic concepts introduced at the start of the workshop were as follows:

1. *Intra-action*: A new perspective on interaction, underlying the fact that the intra-acting bodies constitute each other when intra-acting. According to Barad (2010), "in contrast to the usual 'interaction' the notion of intra-action recognises that distinct entities, agencies, events do not precede, but rather emerge from and through their intra-action" (Barad, 2010, p. 267).
2. *Entanglement*: A dynamic set of constitutive intra-actions and the agencies they carry. The dynamics of an entanglement lie in the cutting together/apart and the enabling and erasing of diverse (in)separabilities.

3. *Diffraction*: A physical phenomenon that occurs when water, light, or sound waves meet an obstacle, such as when stones dropped into the water provoke a spread of waterings/ripples, bending waves that interfere with and overlap each other (Barad, 2007). The spreading or waving to "somewhere else" emerges out of the agencies of the intra-acting bodies.

4. *Nonlinear time*: Barad presents time as a form of matter, where "past, present and future, [are] not in relation of linear unfolding, but threaded through one another in a nonlinear enfolding of spacetimemattering" (Barad, 2010, p. 244). A diffraction to another spacetimemattering is possible and can be enabled by the agency of any of the intra-acting elements.

During the brainstorming part of the workshop, the educational leaders came up with diverse ideas of how to expose the parents to the materials documenting the kindergarten's history. Presentations, documents, and exhibitions were mentioned, but the group ultimately decided to lock the parents in the playful entanglement of the basement, expose them to the agency of the old toys, and meet the parents as if they were children in this kindergarten.

I did not participate in the meeting, so that the entanglement co-created by the kindergarten staff and the parents would not be disturbed. What I learned from the staff was that a letter was sent to the parents in advance, saying that the staff would like to show the kindergarten to them in an unconventional way. On the day of the meeting, some of the staff were wearing costumes from the eighteenth century and met the parents at the entrance. Such a welcoming facilitated parental diffraction to the past. The parents were guided to a playroom in the basement and said that they would allow all the toys to inspire them. They spent one hour in the basement and were then able to move outside the space to share their experiences. While some parents continued to play on the kindergarten's playground, some shared their experiences. The stories being shared, in an oral form or through notes, captured the experience of diffraction to the past.

The diffraction to the past in Norway was a distinctive experience for migrant parents, who did not have their own past in this country/region. Travelling to the past of a country of their children's future turned out to show the parents a new way of anchoring:

> *I got my roots.*
> *I got my past.*
> *I'm so new here, but I already have my 100 years of history.* (Father 1)

Being in the playful entanglement with other parents seemed to make the parents more aware of the connection that they, as parents of children attending this kindergarten, shared:

> *I actually never thought of our parents as a community who can do something together. It inspired me.* (Mother 1)

Felling a connection was also important for parents who did not feel competent or resourceful enough to contribute during meetings where professional or administrative issues were discussed. In the playful basement, they saw their competences as relevant:

I never know what to say at a parental meeting when parking space, meals, and the economy are discussed. So I was just sitting there… but today, I feel that I've done something. (Father 2)

Seeing the staff playing with the parents and meeting the teachers of their own children as playmates gave some parents the impression that the staff really understood their children, and that the child is taken good care of there:

I saw that the staff really can play like children. Now, I don't worry so much if my child is understood for who she is. They really understand a child here. (Mother 2)

One particularly moving impression of connectedness was shared as a note:

Me always alone here.
Always alone.
But not today.
Today, I belonged. (Anonymous)

The staff experiences, in contrast, were more related to the theoretical toolkit of posthumanism and the effect it had on them and their professional practice:

I've felt for so long that exposing the parents to our old artefacts is a good thing, but without professional knowledge confirming it, I would never ever dare to do it. (Educational Leader 1)

I'm so happy that such theories have grown in the field. For a long time, we took the materiality for granted and were focused on the human-human dimension. This also gave me some ideas for how to strengthen relations in the children's groups through the agency of some materials… (Educational Leader 2)

My intuition was confirmed by a theory, and I feel so much more empowered to try out more of my intuitions in my work with children. (Educational Leader 3)

I understand these quotes as holograms of the inspirational potential of agential realism, which, by troubling and extending the established orbits of reflection, empowers the ECEC professionals to follow own professional intuitions and challenge and improve the institutional practice of parental meetings and collaboration with families. This example shows the potential for change and innovation when conceptualising diverse ECEC practices as intra-active, vibrant entanglements. The fact that agential realism inspires and empowers ideas that have no chance to be taken seriously within the humanistic common-sense of the ECEC sector, is of a great importance.

Conclusion

In this chapter, posthuman theories were presented as potentially inspiring and empowering ways of re-thinking parental collaboration in ECEC settings as an intra-active entanglement of more-than-humans. By acknowledging the belonging of all earthlings to the same matter, this approach organically recognises families as

a constitutive part*(icle)* of more-than-parental involvement. The more-than-parental can in this case relate to both other generations or family members, as well as to more-than-human. Thinking of more-than-parental involvement as an entanglement, whose elements constitute each other and are mutually responsible for each other's existence, brings courage, inspiration, innovation, and hope to the practice of parental involvement. Empowering practitioners to try out practices that "sound crazy" and are difficult to justify through humanistic theoretical toolkits is particularly interesting, as it shows how thinking-with-posthumanism enables innovative practices. Again, such practices are often unimaginable and impossible to conceptualise within a theoretical space that reduces parental involvement to a human-human phenomenon.

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Chapter 12
(Re)theorisation of More-Than-Parental Involvement: New Directions and Hopes

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Abstract When engaging in the re-theorisation of parental involvement (PI), we searched for theories that would (1) embrace more-than-parents as potential collaboration partners, (2) recognise the role of the family in the child's (educational) life, and (3) allow for the possibility of overcoming the "democratic deficit" (Van Laere et al., Eur Early Childhood Educ Res J 26(2):187–200. , 2018, p. 189), by which we mean the possibilities for families to co-create the modalities of their engagement with ECEC settings. The literature review presented in Chap. 2 mapped out the theories employed in research on PI and showed that those theories and models born out of interpretivist aims (i.e. to understand) and critical objectives (i.e. to challenge unjust power relations) have the potential to capture the increasing diversity of families and embrace the unfolding modalities of their engagement in diverse social, cultural, and material contexts. Based on the review, particular theories were chosen and explored in later chapters of this book. In this concluding chapter, we provide a theoretical overview by pointing to new directions for the theoretisation of more-than-parental involvement that are relevant to the ECEC field and the creation of sustainable futures.

Keywords Parental · Intergenerational · Participation · Decolonization · Retheoretisation

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Embracing More-Than-Parents

By embracing *more-than*-parents, we intend to highlight (1) the diversity of family configurations, with all the attachments and relationships that are significant for the child; (2) the role of intergenerational relationships, particularly between young children and older adults; and (3) the agency of materiality, artefacts, and the more-than-human agents involved in PI. The "more-than" thus refers to more than just parents, and more than just the human elements constituting the practice of PI.

Diverse Family Configurations

Before writing this book, we assumed that diversity with respect to family configurations is generally accepted, particularly among new generations of pre-service teachers. During our work with the book one of us conducted an exercise among 120 early childhood teacher education (ECTE) students at the University of Zagreb, and just like the studies of Heilman (2008) and Kušević (2017), the task the students were given was to draw an "ideal family" (individually) and discuss it in groups. The exercise was anchored in visual research methodology, which allowed the students to confront their embodied knowledge and tacit assumptions about the ideal of a family (Heilman, 2008; Kušević, 2017). The tacit assumptions that became explicit in the pictures surprised us all, as 90% (108) of the drawings presented heterosexual couples with two children (2 + 2), with clear gender identities (usually a boy and a girl), and in some cases a dog. The other 10% (12) also drew the 2 + 2 model with the use of abstract lines or shapes (e.g. hearts or circles). Domination of the traditional family ideal opened up pathways for discussion on the students' future collaboration with parents and families who did not necessarily fit into the generated pictures (see examples in Figs. 12.1 and 12.2).

This experience underlines the importance of continuous reflection and challenging one's own pre-assumptions, both when it comes to "who" the family of the child is that the ECEC will co-create collaboration with, but also with respect to the ways in which the collaboration will take place. Potential avenues through which to support such deep reflection can be found in the critical approaches discussed in Chap. 10. Theories of discourse enabled us to unmask the discursive hegemonies (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) underlying our taken-for-granted, common-sense understandings, and narrative inquiry made us aware of the danger of one story (Ewick & Silbey, 1995) and the importance of understanding others' experiences through stories (Clandinin et al., 2016). Both approaches seem to be relevant conceptual tools for continuously unbiasing the (research) practice of PI.

If a deep understanding of contextual, social experience is at stake, then theories that see the individual as intertwined and entangled within a particular context are also very relevant. Here, we would like to underline the significance of the cultural-historical wholeness approach (Fleer & Hedegaard, 2010; Hedegaard, 2005, 2009,

Fig. 12.1   Student drawing no. 1 of an "ideal family". (Source: Own visual data)

Fig. 12.2   Student drawing no. 2 of an "ideal family". (Source: Own visual data)

2012, 2014; Hedegaard & Fleer, 2008) and attachment theories. Attachment theory was revealed in Chap. 2 as a practised way of conceptualising PI; however, due to our limited experience with the approach, it was not discussed in a separate chapter. What attachment theory and the cultural-historical perspective have in common is the focus on the relationality in which a human life is constituted. While the cultural-historical wholeness approach highlights the context of the historically changing societies and institutions to which individuals relate through motives and activities (see Chap. 3), attachment theory emphasises the importance of one's first attachments and explains how they shape our way of approaching increasingly diverse relationships later in life (Bowlby, 1997; Yellin & White, 2012). As attachment is not an abstract phenomenon, but rather a deeply contextual and cultural one, there are different patterns of attachments to various numbers of caregivers valued and practiced across cultures (Van Ijzendoorn & Kroonenberg, 1988). By acknowledging the importance of the child's first connections, and the way they develop into new relationships (e.g. in the context of ECEC), this theoretical approach embraces the families as they are, in all their complex configurations. For instance, one particular possibility that this theory allows for is the tracing of the toddler's/child's attachment to ECEC professionals as a facilitator of the attachment between ECEC and the family.

While the cultural-historical wholeness approach would rather explore the development of the dialectical connections between the child, the family, and ECEC through the motives developed in relation to cultural values and societal demands, attachment theory allows for a deep focus on unique human-human relations. Attachment theory focuses on (multiple) connections between people, which we find particularly relevant for studying more-than-parental involvement in the case of very young children and toddlers during their transitions to ECEC settings. These transitions of attachments, including the attachments being established between more-than parents and the ECEC staff, is a little-researched phenomenon, and since it can vary significantly from culture to culture, we see it as an interesting direction for future research.

Intergenerationality

The next important aspect that comes into play when embracing more-than-parents is the intergenerational relationship. In the context of Indigenous families, this notion may be used to honour the important, but usually dislocated, relationships between elders (ARACY, 2016; Hayes et al., 2009). In the case of non-Indigenous families, there seems to be a trial involved in joining generations that modernisation separated from each other:

> In the Western world, children live in a separate world from older people. Apart from family members, they don't come into contact with older people. So, this is a way of bringing them into contact with older people, other than grandparents. For older people, it brings something

new, and brings life to them. —Leila, coordinator, "The Dice: Young Meet Old", the Netherlands (The Toy Consortium, 2013, p. 3)

Particularly in times of increased migration and diaspora formation, even the children's contact with their own grandparents cannot be taken for granted; ideas of joining the children and older adults from the same localities should be accruing (Oropilla, 2020, 2021; Oropilla & Ødegaard, 2021).

Theories that seem to resonate with the intergenerationality of the family and easily allow for the presence of more generations of adults to become engaged with a child are those that embrace the complex and relational context of the child. Such theoretical models include the cultural-historical wholeness approach, ecological systems theory, attachment theory, agential realism, the theory of practice architectures, and Epstein's models of overlapping spheres as potentially productive parental toolkits.

While the cultural-historical wholeness approach facilitates the description of such intergenerational interactions as interpersonal or interinstitutional, thus serving particular values, ecological systems theory accounts for these interactions as another collaborative activity on the mesosystem level, as is evident in the work of Oropilla (2020, 2021). The theory of attachment could potentially be employed to track the established (intergenerational) attachments as they are transferred to ECEC settings; it could also be used to examine the new attachments being established as children and the elderly come together.

Another theory that could embrace the intergenerational aspect seems to be one of practice architectures. It could offer a way of conceptualising the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements (called *sayings*, *doings*, and *relatings*; see Chap. 9) as constituting diverse practices that facilitate intergenerational meetings. This theory's ability to embrace social practices in their ecologies with other practices could also account for intergenerational meetings as they occur in the institutional practices of old-age homes.

One more concept that interestingly opens for intergenerational collaborations is the concept of a family's *vibrancy. Vibrancy* embraces the "family's linguistic, cultural, vocational, artistic, social, emotional, spiritual, and ethnic dimensions" (Preston et al., 2018, p. 549). According to Preston et al. (2018), such a notion should be included in the types of involvement suggested by Epstein (1995; Epstein et al., 2019). While this idea of vibrancy inspires one to embrace the family's intergenerationally as their socio-emotional, ethnic, and spiritual resource, it also extends and dynamically adapts the other well-established theoretical toolkits.

Agential realism offers a way of describing such meetings as vibrant entanglements of more-than-humans intra-acting together(apart) and acknowledges the essential role of materiality. The care and ethics of our existence are implied by the fact that our being-with-the-world is mutually constituted in intra-actions, and this idea could also become a conceptual toolkit for describing the ethical standpoints behind the facilitation of intergenerational practices. Agential realism can also be interpreted as a potentially decolonising theoretisation, as it questions the core of Western ontologies (Barad, 2007, 2010; Murris, 2016; Murris & Osgood, 2022) and

thus creates a basis for the deep acknowledgement of Indigenous and non-Western ontologies.

Moving one step further into theoretical decolonisation, researchers from non-Western countries can explain how their local philosophies could be employed as ways of theoretically understanding intergenerational engagements across ECEC and other institutions or in less formal settings. In this vein, Oropilla and Guadana (2021) describe the great potential of Philippian perspectives to inspire the conceptualisation of intergenerational connections.

The Agency of the Materiality, Artefacts, and More-Than-Human Agents Involved in PI

The role of the material context is accounted for by cultural-historical approaches, as well as posthuman perspectives. The cultural-historical approach has a long tradition of describing *artefacts* as mediating human learning and engagement with cultural values and other humans (Rogoff, 2003; Wartofsky, 1979). By recognising the material aspect of cultures, this theoretical approach allows us to think of culturally responsive practices as involving artefacts and the ECEC space.

However, in Chap. 2, an article by Nagel and Wells (2009) reports on the honouring of a family's culture through artefacts based on an adjustment of Epstein's (1995) model to the contexts of Indigenous families. Originally, Epstein's model did not focus on cultural responsiveness or artefacts; in this case, it was transformed to meet the intentions of the authors and the needs of the participating groups.

A theory that has a clear connection to Indigenous ontologies, but which is (strangely) not used in relation to them is, according to Rosiek et al. (2020), posthumanism. As presented in Chap. 11, the radically relational ontology of posthumanism can empower ECEC staff to try out very courageous material-based practices that, without this theoretical language, would not be justifiable. Acknowledging humans and non-humans as belonging to the same matter overcomes the dichotomy between humans and non-humans and allows for more-than-parental involvement to be understood as the intra-active entanglement of more-than-humans bearing organic ethical responsibility for each other's existence.

Acknowledging the Families' *Part*

Theories that allow us to acknowledge families as a genuine *part* of the network around the child, and thus the practice of PI, seem to be those associated with social capital (Coleman, 1998), as discussed in Chap. 5, and the idea of quality as meaning-making (Dahlberg et al., 2013), which is briefly presented in Chap. 10. The theory of social capital, by focusing networks and the common benefits of being together,

implies an understanding of each member as a potential benefiter and resource for others, and thus recognises the genuine *part* that parents have in their contact and collaboration with ECEC and other parents.

The theory of ECEC quality as meaning-making recognises and respects all actors' perspectives and meanings, and through this process, the families (but also the professionals, children, owners, and other possible stakeholders) are assumed to be agents co-creating a good (meaningful) ECEC and a good (meaningful) life for the children and the broader community (Dahlberg et al., 2013).

Another theory acknowledging the parents' *part* in both the children's lives and ECEC is the theory of attachment. In valuing the primary attachment between the child and the caregiver, it has great potential to provide new insights into and understandings of more-than-parental involvement and partnerships between ECEC and families. This primary attachment is the one growing from the organic connection (to family) that the child brings into the institutional context of ECEC.

The acknowledgement of an organic and genuine parental *part* of PI is also related to the competences and understandings of ECEC professionals. Aware of the demands for different qualifications of the various ECTE programmes that exist around the world (Boyd & Garvis, 2021), we point out the general necessity of socio-emotional competence (Katz & McClellan, 1997; Talvio et al., 2015) and awareness of one's own prejudices (Evans, 2013) in establishing partnerships both with families and other actors. In this sense, Pedro et al. (2012) show how throughout history, professionals' attitudes towards families in education have been rather negative. Nevertheless, these attitudes seem to be important to work on. In a related study, Deslandes et al. (2015) show how different attitudes towards parents are represented by teachers who perceive themselves as un/successful in their work with parents, and that those who experience successful collaboration exhibit the attitude that partnerships with parents are an organic part of their work as ECEC professionals.

Another format for acknowledging that families constitute a *part* of PI is the research mapping of socio-economic, cultural, linguistic, and logistical barriers to the participation of families with lower socio-economic status or im/migrant backgrounds (Arndt & McGuire-Schwartz, 2008; Eliyahu-Levi, 2022; Leareau & McNamara Horvat, 1999). Bourdieu's social theory (1990; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) emerges here as a theoretical toolkit that is helpful for understanding how schools, by acknowledging and serving the middle-class habitus, exclude parents who do not fit with their hidden expectations. However, as described in Chap. 8, this theory might also be used to describe how parents, by using different forms of capital (e.g. economic, cultural, or social), can negotiate relationships with the ECEC setting. Furthermore, narrative scholarship may also be used to present families' lingual and cultural practices as counternarratives that challenge the deficit discourse on migrant and Indigenous families (Ejuu & Opiyo, 2022; Jacobs et al., 2021).

Overcoming (or acknowledging?) the Democratic Deficit

In our view, the future of research on PI must overcome the "democratic deficit", identified by Van Laere et al. (2018) as the "goals and modalities of parental involvement" being created "without the involvement of parents themselves" (p. 189). A theoretical approach that is sensitive to the eventual deficit of participation or experiences of meaninglessness in collaboration with ECEC is the conceptualisation of ECEC quality as meaning-making, developed by Dahlberg et al. (2013). In their focus on the dialogical creation of meaning, Dahlberg et al. (2013) assume that the honest and respectful sharing of one's own perceptions, experiences, and opinions is the essence of a meaningful practice. As this approach recognises various stakeholders – not only parents and professionals, but also children, owners, and other relevant professionals – as important voices, overcoming the democratic deficit in this way also extends to parents.

As presented in Chap. 10, dialogue and dialogue-based involvement may turn out to construct an arena that, regardless of one's own intentions, silences other-than-verbal articulations and ways of being and participating in the ECEC community. However, theories of discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985) related to Dahlberg's et al. (2013) approach to ECEC quality are able to capture the hegemonies of meaning and unmask how the "obviousness" of dialogue is created. Discourse theory's sensitivity to both social discourses and individual narratives allows us to capture cases in which the experiences of individual families are excluded from or challenge discursive hegemonies.

An interesting approach to overcoming the democratic deficit is implied in Biesta's (2004, 2006) concept of the *other community*, or a *community of those who have nothing in common.* Such a community is created by challenging the rules of rational communities characterised by the codes and expectations of what and how can be articulated. The *other community* constitutes itself as an arena in which every participant is exposed as possessing an unpredictable and unique voice, which obligates one to stay responsive to what is articulated and thus become responsible for the community.

When tracing the power relations between parents and education, Mendel (2020), inspired by Foucault's theory, distinguishes between power relationships that are "strategic games between freedoms" (Foucault, 1988, p. 19; Mendel 2020, p. 94) with the aim of influencing behaviour, and those that are established relations of domination. Mendel (2019) recognises educational institutions as creating real spaces for democracy understood as games between different freedoms that have a potential of challenging the established relations of domination. Furthermore, Mendel (2019) portrays democracy in an educational settings as a non-consensual form of governance, already imposed on parents/families as a way of collaboration. From such a standpoint, it is quite impossible to talk about a democratic deficit, as, according to Mendel (2020), the deficit is a part of democracy itself. As power relations are unavoidable, Mendel (2019, 2020) suggests using it in the best possible

ways, such as through the development of change-making partnerships between empowered schools, families, and communities.

From Collaboration to Partnership

The partnership of families and teachers represents the most desirable type of collaborative relationship between the home and ECEC. Partnership is characterised by equality, responsibility, two-way communication, and action towards a common goal (Maleš, 2015). It is a relationship that assumes active participation, mutual support, and joint learning based on mutual respect and trust. Developing partnerships takes time and the willingness of all involved to be part of the process. The teachers' competence and the families will seem to be of particular importance in the context of education. Despite a great body of research showing the importance of establishing educational partnerships (Hornby, 2000, 2011; Epstein, 2001; Whalley, 2007; Patrikakou, 2016), developing them in the social practice of ECEC is difficult.

Ideal partnerships are characterised by reciprocity and mutuality. Dunst et al. (1994) claim that reciprocity is a prerequisite for achieving the most desirable form of collaborative relationship – that is, a partnership. Trust, a phenomenon described as a catalysator of social relationships, interactions, and transactions (Sztompka, 1999, 2007), is also important for transforming cooperation into partnerships. When it comes to the development of trust in cooperations, Downer and Myers (2010) emphasise time and effort as key factors. This means that trust-based relationships are built gradually and appear more quickly if the ongoing contacts are characterised by openness and respect – as in the case of the *other community* (Biesta, 2004). Given that cooperation between parents and teachers is motivated by a common goal and mutual benefits, it is legitimate to expect that all parties will make some efforts to facilitate a faster development of trust.

Conclusion

When re-theorising more-than-parental involvement as an acknowledging, culturally responsive, and democratic practice (Biesta, 2004; Mendel, 2020; Van Laere et al., 2018; Vandenbroeck, 2009), which serves the values of the rights of the child (UN, 1989) and social sustainability (Ärlemalm-Hagsér & Elliott, 2017; Boldermo & Ødegaard, 2019; Davis & Elliott, 2014; Eriksen, 2013; Hägglund & Johansson, 2014; Samuelson & Park, 2017), we underline the importance of theories that allow us to capture the contextual and relational dimensions of partnerships between ECEC settings and more-than-parents. The diverse theoretical perspectives of psychological, sociological, and philosophical origins explored in this book are thus an invitation to employ more than just models, and to reflect on the conceptual toolkits

and what they allow (and do not allow) one to perceive and reflect on. We conclude with an articulation of our hope for more theoretisations to come, inspired by non-Western perspectives, that respect and create meaningful attachments and embrace both intergenerational and material matters. Our hope also extends in the direction of ECTE and theories embracing the processes through which pre-service teachers can be taught to form partnerships with more-than-parents.

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Correction to: (Re)theorising More-than-parental Involvement in Early Childhood Education and Care

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The book was inadvertently published with an incorrect spelling of "theocratization"/"theocratisations". This has now been corrected as theoretisation/theoretisations in the following pages:

Chapter 1 - pages 1 and 12
Chapter 9 - page 165
Chapter 12 - pages 191 and 200

In addition to this, in Chapter 2, when referring to a study in a table (page 49) and in the text (page 55) the country name was wrongly used as Columbia. This has now been corrected to Peru.