

# Parent Involvement Policy in Established and New Immigrant Destinations\*

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*Objectives.* This study examines how schools situated in different “contexts of reception” go about the critical task of engaging and supporting immigrant parents. *Methods.* Using data from the 2003–04 National Center for Educational Statistics’ Schools and Staffing Surveys, we estimate regression models to test the effects of cultural brokers, teacher training, and professional development on school policies and practices specifically designed to engage and support immigrant parents as well as more traditional, school- and home-based parent involvement programs. *Results.* We find cultural brokers and school attributes are more strongly associated with the type and magnitude of parent involvement programs in established destinations, whereas teacher training and in-service professional development are most consistently associated with these policies in new destination schools. We also find a strong association between minority principals (African American or Latino) and parent involvement programming in new destinations, suggesting that principals of color are taking an active role in addressing the needs of immigrant and minority parents. *Conclusions.* As the U.S. population becomes increasingly multicultural, these findings have important policy implications for both federal and local governments.

In recent decades, the United States has witnessed large-scale immigration that is more racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse than earlier decades. Although immigration is much talked about in the media today, less attention is paid to how these marked demographic changes are affecting U.S. schools. Thus, an often-overlooked consequence is that children of immigrants—both foreign and U.S. born—represent a rising share of the school-age population: increasing from 6 to 20 percent between 1970 and 2000, estimates suggest another 30 percent increase by 2015 (Fix et al., 2004). This growth is most evident in the Latino elementary school population, which increased by more than 50 percent in the 1990s, reaching approximately 3.6 million by 2000 (Zhou and Logan, 2003).

As the institution at the frontline of receiving immigrants to this country, in this study, we focus on a set of critical questions: What are schools doing to

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support immigrant parents, foster their involvement in their children's schooling and education, and generally create strong parent-school relations? Three notable phenomena suggest the urgency of addressing these questions. First, a substantial body of research has linked parent involvement to an increasingly wide range of schooling outcomes, including improvements in mathematics, reading, and other subjects (Jeynes, 2003), student self-esteem (Brown, 1989), teacher confidence (Hoover-Dempsey et al., 1987), and community relations (Coleman, 1991). Second, though little is known about the efficacy of traditional modes of parental involvement for immigrant students, the persistent achievement gap between Latinos, the largest immigrant group in American schools, and Anglos suggests that parent involvement is an area that can and should be targeted in order to narrow this gap. For example, in 2006, the status dropout rate for Latinos was 22 percent compared to 5.8 percent for Anglos, and since 1992, the Anglo-Latino achievement gap has, on average, shrunk by only one percentage point in reading and three percentage points in math (Planty et al., 2008). Third, schools face additional pressure from national education reform initiatives that include mandates regarding parent involvement. A case in point is the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act (2002), which requires schools receiving Title I funds to develop a written parent involvement policy jointly with parents to not only identify barriers to participation among immigrant and minority populations, but to also create a strategy to address these barriers.

We argue that the policy response from schools is shaped in part by the context within which immigrant groups are received and the historical origins of each immigrant group (Portes and Rumbaut, 2001). Although others have documented national origin and ethnic variation in parent involvement, this study examines a parallel process and asks how schools situated in different contexts of reception go about the critical task of engaging parents. Using the National Center for Educational Statistics 2003–04 Schools and Staffing Surveys (SASS), our focus on geographic variation reveals the extent to which schools in established versus new immigrant destinations vary in their attempts to build stronger relations with parents and identifies key factors associated with such variation.

In the next section, we review extant research on school-initiated parent involvement looking first at how parent involvement is defined and the forms it typically takes, particularly among immigrant and minority populations. We then examine the prevalence of different policies and practices that promote and monitor parent involvement, and conduct multivariate tests that examine how school attributes, such as teacher training and professional development, the presence of cultural brokers, and indicators of “effective schools” explain this variation and ultimately predict what kinds of parent outreach schools sponsor. In the last section, we discuss the mechanisms that have contributed to the observed patterns in parental involvement and their implications for research and policy.

## What is Parent Involvement?

Parent involvement is a multidimensional concept, referring most generally to a partnership between school actors and parents that promotes the “social, emotional, and academic growth of children” (National Education Goals Panel, 1999:vi). Scholars have conceptualized and measured parent involvement in a variety of ways (Bauch, 1994), but recently have focused on the role schools play in shaping involvement. Building upon typologies delineated by Epstein (1995) and Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000), we focus in particular on three dimensions of parent involvement: (1) activities that include communication between schools and parents, (2) parent attendance at events held at school, and (3) parent support of learning that takes place at home.<sup>1</sup>

Communication with parents includes the sharing of information about school programs and opportunities, as well as the academic progress and success of children, and has been deemed by teachers as critical to student achievement (Baker, 1997). Others have argued that this form of outreach is particularly important for racial and language minority parents, particularly when outreach can be provided in numerous languages (Goldberg, 1993). The second dimension of parent involvement—school events—is the most common definition of participation and the one schools rely on most (Lopez et al., 2001; Scribner et al., 1999). Typical examples include attending Parent Teacher Association (PTA) meetings or open houses and volunteering in the classroom or at school. While high levels of parent involvement in school-based activities tend to be associated with “effective” schools, this form of participation has also been directly linked to academic achievement (Barnard, 2004; Lee and Bowen, 2006). The last dimension—home-based involvement—represents parent practices and behaviors related to schooling and education that take place outside of school, usually at home. Such practices include assisting and supervising children with homework and other school-related tasks, reading to children, and talking with them about academic issues (Pomerantz, Moorman, and Litwack, 2007). Studies find that teachers tend to view a lack of home involvement as a detriment to both students and teachers and believe that students’ valuation of education is directly linked to the expectations and values of their parents. Indeed, home-based parent involvement is perceived as the primary means of stressing educational importance (Lawson, 2003).

<sup>1</sup> Epstein’s (1995) typology includes (1) helping parents develop a supportive home environment; (2) communicating with parents about programs and student progress; (3) recruiting parent volunteers; (4) helping parents support their children with homework and learning; (5) involving parents as decisionmakers; and (6) providing links to social support services in the community. Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) later added two forms of involvement to Epstein’s typology to acknowledge the importance of training teachers and staff to work effectively with parents: (7) training teachers to work with families and (8) reaching out to culturally diverse families in the community.

**Differences by Race, Ethnicity, and Nativity**

Few studies have systematically documented racial, ethnic, and nativity differences in parent involvement, but those that focus on minority or immigrant parents find that participation is lower for these parents than for Anglo and U.S.-born parents (Floyd, 1998; Turney and Kao, 2009). One explanation for these differentials suggests that it is not race, ethnicity, or nativity per se that lead to lower levels of participation, but rather parents' income, education, and degree of interracial contact (Llagas and Snyder, 2003; Louie, 2004). This explanation is consistent with studies that point to status barriers, such as language limitations or inadequate transportation, as factors that disproportionately discourage and reduce immigrant and minority parent involvement, especially in formal activities (Floyd, 1998; Zhou and Logan, 2003).

In contrast to these resource explanations, an alternative line of reasoning focuses on the unique perspectives of immigrant and minority populations and argues that culturally specific values and experiences may mean that the forms of these parents' involvement in schooling and education look different from those emphasized by schools or by their Anglo or U.S.-born counterparts (Lawson, 2003). For example, Louie's (2004) study of Chinese immigrant parents found that parents were less involved in formal school activities and more involved in arranging for extracurricular activities, such as supplemental tutoring and expanding knowledge about the admissions criteria of different universities. On the other hand, Latino parents appear to conceptualize their role as one of nurturing, teaching values, and instilling good behavior (Chavkin and Gonazalez, 1995). Lopez (2001) finds that these parents take an active, but nontraditional (by Anglo standards), role in their children's education by giving advice or "consejos," but feel they are encroaching on the school's territory when asked to take on responsibilities they view as part of the school's domain (Daniel-White, 2002; Tinkler, 2002).

Despite the research confirming that minority and immigrant parents' perceptions of their roles and responsibilities are different than those of teachers and administrators in schools, most schools focus on traditional forms of parent involvement. By privileging these forms of participation, schools often overlook culturally-specific perspectives of immigrant/minority populations and deflect attention away from developing parental involvement programs that target these groups (Valencia, 1997). Yet this does not imply that schools offer fewer programs or devote fewer resources to fostering parent involvement among these groups. For example, Kessler-Sklar and Baker's (2000) analysis of 200 school districts in 15 states revealed a positive correlation between the number and type of school involvement policies and the percentage of at-risk students in the district. More specifically, districts with larger percentages of minority and non-English-speaking students had a greater number of policies that involve parents as decisionmakers, foster communication with parents regarding students' academic success, provide links to social services, and explicitly involve a diverse group of parents.

Taken together, the literature suggests that, first, although immigrant and minority parents are less likely to engage in certain types of parent involvement activities and report lower overall levels of involvement than their non-minority and U.S.-born counterparts, the schools and districts where immigrant and minority parents are most concentrated may actually be offering more parent involvement activities and taking more steps to promote parent involvement. Second, it may be that quantity of parent involvement programs are not necessarily related to quality: offering more opportunities may not lead to more involvement. The purpose of this study is to extend work by Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) using a larger and nationally representative sample to examine whether schools with greater shares of minority and immigrant students do indeed adopt parent involvement policies more than schools with smaller shares, and if so, why. In particular, what do schools do to foster better relations with immigrant and/or minority parents, and how effective are these efforts at influencing the nature and extent of parent involvement?

### **The Context of Reception and Determinants of Parent Involvement Policy**

Part of the answer to these questions lies in a closer examination of the context in which immigrant/minority parents and schools interact. Where and when immigrants enter the United States and the sociopolitical features of the communities in which they reside play a critical role in shaping their expectations, experiences, and interactions with schools and other institutions. In particular, we believe two aspects of the receiving community influence the extent to which schools address the concerns of immigrants—resources and demand. The ability to generate adequate resources hinges on experience with immigration, and the subsequent historical development of institutions and structures to assist with the assimilation of newcomers. Demand, on the other hand, rests on the size of the population, both historically and contemporaneously, and fluctuations in population demographics over time. Thus, in this study, we examine differences in parent involvement policies across two distinct contexts of reception: *established destinations*, which include both the metro areas that have served as primary immigrant gateways and communities along the U.S.–Mexico border that may be outside of metropolitan areas, and *new immigrant destinations*, which are characterized by smaller, but rapidly expanding foreign-born populations.<sup>2</sup> Following Singer's (2004) model, we focus on gateways because they have historically served as the primary entry

<sup>2</sup>We base our designations on Singer's (2004) gateway classification, merging together categories that capture our two main variables of interest—resources and demand. Thus, we code established destinations as school districts along the border in “traditional” and “Post-WW2” gateways and new destinations as “emerging,” “pre-emerging,” and “re-emerging” gateways. See Table 1 for a list of school districts and metropolitan or micropolitan areas by context of reception.

for immigrants to the United States and symbolize a well-known destination for newcomers looking to connect to social networks.

*Established Destinations* such as New York, Chicago, Houston, and communities along the border are characterized by a longstanding history of immigrant settlement.<sup>3</sup> While school districts in these destinations have often struggled to accommodate newcomers, their extended history with Latino and immigrant populations, as well as the fact that they have large native-born Latino and Asian populations, place them at a distinct advantage for addressing immigrant issues. For example, compared to newly arrived immigrants, second- and third-generation Latino and Asian residents have the experience and social networks to find employment and adequate housing and to access social services (Suro and Passel, 2003). Established destinations are also more likely to have advocacy groups or institutions that promote immigrant interests and provide resources and assistance to immigrants (Singer, 2004). One example is the Chinese language school, which not only promotes language acquisition and Chinese culture and traditions among U.S.-born children of Chinese immigrants but also teaches immigrant parents about the American educational system (Zhou and Kim, 2006).

Established destinations have also made progress when it comes to political incorporation, suggesting more access to representative responsiveness and an enhanced capacity to advocate on behalf of immigrant groups. For example, of the 4,050 Latino elected officials in 2001, almost 90 percent lived in established destinations (NALEO, 2001). In addition, although the political climate in some established destinations has grown increasingly anti-immigrant in recent decades (e.g., Proposition 187 in California), local groups in many of these places have learned to effectively mobilize and utilize demand-protest strategies to combat this hostile environment and effect positive policy change (Browning, Marshall, and Tabb, 1984).

In contrast to established gateways, *New Destinations* have witnessed tremendous growth in their foreign-born population in the last 20 years (Chapa and de la Rosa, 2004), and have thus had less time to adjust and adapt to incoming populations than have established destinations. Consequently, they have fewer resources and less infrastructure to address immigrant needs and the incorporation process is considerably more complex. For example, Latino immigrants in new destinations often confront hostility and discrimination, hampering their attempts at social and political integration (Kochar, Suro, and Tafoya, 2005). The influx of a young, mainly Spanish-speaking population can also challenge the traditional black-white racial dynamics of many new destination places (Marrow, 2008). African Americans in these locations have made progress in gaining elected office, yet research suggests that Latinos are less likely to get elected to local school boards in districts where the African-American

<sup>3</sup>Border areas are unique in that, prior to annexation by the United States, Latinos (Mexicans) lived in what are now the states of Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas, and as such cannot be considered "immigrants."

population is larger than the Latino population (Marschall, 2005). Although other studies report that the U.S. born in some small towns have positive sentiments about immigrant newcomers and many residents show a significant degree of acceptance because they associate immigrants with renewed economic vitality (Fennelly, 2008), without the organizational supports and advocacy structures, immigrants in new destinations are likely to be initially disadvantaged in ways that significantly affect the schooling and educational outcomes of their children.

Given these differences in immigration history and subsequent institutional response, we hypothesize that the availability and delivery of parent involvement programs and policies will differ by the context of reception, with schools in established destinations offering more than new destinations. In the next section, we highlight two key factors that we expect to be correlated with parent involvement policy and to vary by destination type: cultural brokers and teacher training/professional development.

### ***Cultural Brokers***

Cultural brokers are typically defined as school personnel who have important connections to their racial or ethnic origin group whether through mutual history or shared sociocultural experiences (Achinstein and Aguirre, 2008). While they are often teachers of color, this need not be the case since teachers who share religious, country of origin, or other culturally relevant characteristics can also serve in this capacity. Principals may also serve as cultural brokers, both as persons with shared experiences and culture, and as the key person making hiring decisions that influence the racial and ethnic composition of teachers and other school staff. As Stewart et al. (1989) found in their study of African-American representation in schools, when principals and other school administrators are persons of color themselves, the proportion of minority teachers in the school is significantly higher than when these leadership positions are filled by whites.<sup>4</sup>

Cultural brokers, such as Latino or Asian teachers and administrators, are believed to improve the school-parent-community environment in a number of ways. First, studies have shown that the cultural connection between these teachers and their students has positive effects on minority student achievement, including reductions in dropout rates and disciplinary action, and increases in college attendance (Meier and England, 1984). Other studies have found positive effects of cultural brokers on the promotion of positive

<sup>4</sup>This line of work, referred to as “representational bureaucracy” by political scientists, examines the extent to which the public sector workforce shares the racial, ethnic, gender, and other demographic characteristics of the population it serves and how representation along these attributes shapes organizational performance, public attitudes and behaviors, and the promotion of democratic values in society. The concept and causal mechanisms are similar to those embodied in the literature on “cultural brokers.”

role models (Good, 1981), culturally relevant teaching, and easing teachers' transition to working in high-minority urban schools (Achinstein and Aguiree, 2008).

Second, cultural brokers have been linked to productive processes and outcomes related to parents and communities. In particular, teachers of color are often better equipped at recognizing and addressing cultural differences that manifest themselves in parental attitudes and behaviors that might be misinterpreted as disengagement or indifference. For example, schools with larger shares of language minority and immigrant parents often face challenges because these parents may be unfamiliar with school procedures and expectations and/or intimidated by school administrators. Without linguistically and culturally sensitive school personnel, parents may view school-based activities as less welcoming (Daniel-White, 2002). Studies have found that having racial/ethnic minorities present as school administrators and teachers does indeed foster more supportive relations and stronger ties between schools and parents (Marschall, 2006; Shah, 2009). Therefore, effective parent involvement programs that involve partnerships between schools and immigrant or minority parents require that schools explicitly develop policies that focus on cultural differences and find ways to accommodate them.

Despite the need for cultural brokers, diversity among the teaching force is not keeping pace. Instead, teachers continue to be predominantly white, monolingual, and middle class (Urban Teacher Challenge, 2000). Moreover, despite targeted recruitment efforts, minority teachers constituted less than 10 percent of the teaching force in 2008 (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2008), down from roughly 15 percent in 1994 (Goodwin et al., 1997). Given their smaller shares, the paucity of minority teachers/cultural brokers should be most acute in new destinations,<sup>5</sup> and thus we expect that cultural brokers play a more limited role in shaping school-parent involvement policy in new versus established destinations.

### ***Teacher Training and Professional Development***

In the absence of a sizable and well-educated adult population of immigrants or persons of color, teacher training and professional development around issues of cultural competency and language issues take on added importance. Unfortunately, studies show that teacher preparation in parent involvement is not well developed. For example, Shartrand et al. (1997:11) found that most state teacher certification requirements did not mention parent involvement, and those that did tended to do so only in superficial ways. In a similar vein,

<sup>5</sup>Data from the 2003–04 SASS show this to be true: Latinos and Asians comprised 16 and 2.5 percent of teachers in established destination schools, compared to 1.7 and .6 percent of teachers in new destination schools. A similar pattern obtains for principals: Latino and Asian principals were found in 16 and .8 percent of traditional destination schools and 2.5 and 0 percent in new destinations.

teacher education programs give scant attention to parent involvement in general or working with immigrant or minority parents in particular. Chavkin and Williams (1988) found that only 4 percent of teacher educators taught a complete course on parent involvement and only 15 percent reported teaching part of a course on the topic. In contrast, 73 percent of teachers and 83 percent of principals and teacher educators agreed that an undergraduate course on parent involvement should be required. Finally, according to a 2002 NCES report, 41 percent of U.S. teachers worked with limited English-proficient students, but only 12 percent received eight or more hours of related teacher training (NCES, 2002).

The discrepancy between teachers' preservice preparation and the skills and knowledge they need to work effectively with parents can be addressed through teacher induction and in-service professional development programs. With regard to developing a teaching force that is competent to work with immigrant and minority families, a number of innovative approaches and practices have been proposed. Chief among these are programs that treat teachers as empowered professionals who are key players in the process of identifying problems and designing professional development programs to address them (Gonzalez and Darling-Hammond, 1997). Trumbull and Pacheco (2004) conclude that when teacher preparation and professional development include attention to issues of culture, language, race, and ethnicity, teachers develop cultural knowledge, which in turn positively affects student engagement and achievement.

While the longstanding experience with immigrant parents may predispose schools in established destinations to devote more attention and resources to teacher training and professional development, it is also possible that these schools will rely more heavily on cultural brokers to navigate and forge school-parent relations. Thus, an alternative explanation is that teacher training and in-service professional development will play a larger role in new immigrant destinations since schools in this context of reception may place greater weight on empowering teachers in these processes in order to offset the lack of cultural brokers. Below, we test these rival hypotheses, along with our hypothesis regarding the stronger effects of cultural brokers in established destinations.

## **Data and Methods**

Using school and principal files from the 2003–04 SASS data, we examine policies and practices specifically designed to engage and support immigrant parents as well as more traditional, school- and home-based parent involvement programs. Given our interest in immigrant parents, we limit our analysis to schools in the metropolitan areas of established and new immigrant gateways and districts along the U.S.–Mexico border. This selection rule yielded 1,295 schools and represents roughly 15 percent of schools in the 2003–04

SASS sample.<sup>6</sup> Table 1 reports the number of schools by Core Based Statistical Area (CBSA) (metropolitan and micropolitan statistical areas) for established and new destinations.

The SASS data set contains detailed information on a variety of school-parent involvement practices and programs. We constructed summary indices (summed rating scales representing the proportion of program/policies offered by schools) capturing three different dimensions of parent involvement. First is the *LEP* (limited English proficient) *Parent Outreach* index, constructed from a set of questions regarding programs targeting parents with limited English proficiency. These questions asked whether schools provided (1) interpreters for meetings or parent-teacher conferences, (2) translations of printed materials such as newsletters, school notices, or school signs, and (3) outreach or referral services for limited-English-proficient parents.

The second index, *School-Based Involvement*, represents the more traditional forms of parent involvement and includes seven items that asked principals whether their schools offered each of the following: (1) parent workshops and classes, (2) written contracts between schools and parents, (3) opportunities for parents to serve as volunteers on a regular basis, (4) staff assigned to work on parent involvement, (5) a log of parent participation maintained by parents or staff, (6) parent support services such as childcare and transportation, and (7) a drop-in center for parents at school. Finally, the third index focuses on the kinds of home-based involvement identified by Epstein (1995), but incorporates an additional dimension (mandated policy) due to the SASS question wording. Specifically, the *Home-Based Involvement* index items asked whether schools had a *requirement* that teachers (1) send information home to parents explaining homework, (2) provide suggestions for activities parents can do with their children, and (3) create homework that involves parents.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Modeling Parent Involvement Programs in Established and New Destinations***

To test whether our key explanatory variables are differentially associated with the nature and extent of parent involvement policies in different contexts of reception, we estimate separate models for schools located in established

<sup>6</sup>The sample design for the school survey met the objectives for SASS and took into consideration the response burden for schools. The main design objective of the school survey was to provide estimates of school characteristics by the following key analytical domains: the nation; elementary and secondary levels by public and private sectors; Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) schools and schools with a student population that is at least 25 percent American Indian or Alaska Native; school levels of public schools by state; and private schools by association group, region, and school level (note: the current study is based only on the public school sample). Another objective was to balance the requirements of the samples in SASS. The 2003–04 SASS sampled schools first and local education agencies (LEAs) afterward.

<sup>7</sup>Reliability coefficients are 0.782 (*LEP Parent Outreach*), 0.637 (*School-Based Involvement*), and 0.694 (*Home-Based Involvement*).

TABLE 1  
Sample Schools and Areas, by Context of Reception

	Number of Schools in SASS Sample
<i>Established Gateways</i>	
Boston-Cambridge-Quincy, MA-NH MSA	3
Chicago-Naperville-Joliet, IL-IN-WI MSA	81
New York-Northern New Jersey-Long Island, NY-NJ-PA MSA	157
San Francisco-Oakland-Fremont, CA MSA	29
Houston-Baytown-Sugar Land, TX MSA	53
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-Miami Beach, FL MSA	33
Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario, CA MSA	26
San Diego-Carlsbad-San Marcos, CA MSA	28
Los Angeles-Long Beach-Santa Ana, CA MSA	81
Beaumont-Port Arthur, TX MSA	1
El Paso, TX MSA*	5
Laredo, TX MSA*	2
McAllen-Edinburg-Mission, TX MSA*	8
Rio Grande City-Roma, TX Micropolitan Statistical Area*	1
Deming, NM Micropolitan Statistical Area*	3
Las Cruces, NM Micropolitan Statistical Area*	14
Nogales, AZ Micropolitan Statistical Area*	1
Sierra Vista-Douglas, AZ Micropolitan Statistical Area*	3
Tucson, AZ MSA*	14
Yuma, AZ MSA*	4
Zapata County Independent School District, TX**	1
Lourdsburg Municipal Schools, NM**	2
Animas Public Schools, NM**	1
<i>New Destinations</i>	
Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Marietta, GA MSA	47
Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX MSA	62
Las Vegas-Paradise, NV MSA	58
Orlando, FL MSA	10
Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale, AZ MSA	87
Waterloo-Cedar Falls, IA MSA	142
Denver-Aurora, CO MSA	55
Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI MSA	68
Portland-Vancouver-Beaverton, OR-WA MSA	35
Sacramento-Arden-Arcade-Roseville, CA MSA	14
San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara, CA MSA	14
Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue, WA MSA	55
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater, FL MSA	21
Austin-Round Rock, TX MSA	9
Charlotte-Gastonia-Concord, NC-SC MSA	9
Durham, NC MSA	4
Greensboro-High Point, NC MSA	4
Ogden-Clearfield, UT MSA	34
Raleigh-Cary, NC MSA	11
Winston-Salem, NC MSA	5

\*Places along the U.S.-Mexico border.

\*\*Places not covered by Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Areas.

and new destinations. The model can be summarized as follows:

$$\begin{aligned} &\text{Index of School Involvement Programs} \\ &= f(\text{Cultural Brokers} + \text{Teacher Training/Professional Development} \\ &\quad + \text{Controls}) \end{aligned}$$

**Cultural Brokers.** To operationalize this key construct, we employ variables that measure the racial/ethnic makeup of the teaching faculty (*Percent Latino*, *Percent Asian*, *Percent Black*) and the representation of bilingual or ESL teachers on staff (*Percent Bilingual/ESL* (English as a Second Language)). Since principals may also serve as cultural brokers, we also include a set of dummy variables indicating their race/ethnicity (the excluded category is Anglo or “other”). Given the targeted nature of the *LEP Parent Outreach*, we expect a larger Latino or Asian presence within the school administration to be positively related to these policies, and for this relationship to be stronger in established destinations. On the other hand, given evidence that the resource-driven nature of schools creates a competition among racial groups (Rocha, 2007), we explore the possibility of a negative relationship between LEP parent outreach and black cultural brokers, particularly in new destinations. Lastly, because *School-* and *Home-Based Involvement* policies are not race specific, we expect the presence of any cultural broker to be positively related to the implementation of such policies, but stronger in established destinations.

**Teacher Training/Professional Development.** Teachers who have been trained to work with parents in general and immigrant or minority parents in particular are presumably better able to engage parents and contribute to the creation and implementation of programs that make parent-school relationships stronger. Given the lack of attention to parent involvement training in teacher education programs and in lieu of measures that gauge specific aspects of in-service professional development on this topic, we rely on proxies to operationalize these concepts. In particular, our measure of *Professional Development* focuses on the extent to which in-service training programs are teacher centered, and represents an index constructed from a set of survey questions asking principals whether schools provide teachers with time for professional development during regular contract hours and how often teacher training at the school is (1) planned by teachers in the school or district and (2) accompanied by the resources that teachers need (e.g., time and materials) to make changes in the classroom (never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, always).<sup>8</sup> We also include a binary variable (*ESL Training*) that taps a specific aspect of teacher training most directly relevant for immigrant parents and students: whether the district provides teacher training for ESL

<sup>8</sup>Alpha coefficient for the *Professional Development* index is 0.45.

or bilingual education (1 = yes, 0 otherwise). We expect ESL training to be particularly salient in determining the likelihood of LEP parent outreach policies, but expect professional development to increase all types of parent involvement programs.

**Controls.** Because the types of policies offered by schools are partly driven by need, we also control for the *Percentage LEP, Latino, Asian, and African American* in the school.<sup>9</sup> We also include a variable for the *Percentage of Title 1* students in the school since the NCLB requires schools receiving these federal funds to involve low-income parents in school programs.<sup>10</sup> Schools with larger percentages of Title 1 students should therefore offer more school-based parent involvement programs, but not necessarily more LEP parent outreach or home-based involvement programs.

In addition to school leadership and professional capacity, other attributes of schools are associated with parent involvement policies and outreach and thus are included as controls. In particular, private and other schools of choice (e.g., charters and magnets) are more likely to have institutionalized practices encouraging parent involvement due in part to their widely shared missions and stronger leadership. Schneider et al. (2000) found that school districts characterized by parental choice programs stimulated parents to become more involved in school-related activities by disseminating information and providing assistance to parents. Similarly, Bifulco and Ladd (2006) found more opportunities for parent involvement as well as higher levels of parent participation in charter schools and attributed these differences to organizational characteristics. Finally, other studies have found that smaller schools and those with well-articulated missions also achieved high levels of involvement (Bauch and Goldring, 1995; Schneider et al., 2000). We therefore include controls for *School Size* (student population logged) and whether the school is a *Charter* or *Magnet* (1 = yes, 0 otherwise). While we expect that charter and magnet schools as well as schools with smaller enrollments will offer more school- and home-based parent involvement programs irrespective of where they are located, when it comes to programs for LEP parents, we expect charter and/or magnet schools in particular to have stronger effects in established destinations. Lastly, we include a binary variable for *Elementary Schools* (1 = yes, 0 otherwise), since parent involvement is most prevalent at this level. Finally, descriptive statistics for all variables are reported in Table 2.

<sup>9</sup>Not surprising, the percentage of minority students in a school is highly correlated to the percentage of teachers with these racial/ethnic characteristics. We tried using categorical measures here rather than actual percentages, but with little effect on the correlations. Thus, we utilize the percentages in these models, leading to larger robust standard errors, but remaining in line with the theoretical model specification.

<sup>10</sup>Title 1 students are defined as those eligible for free/reduced lunch, which includes families with incomes at or near the poverty level. Title 1 funds are targeted at schools with the highest percentages of low-income families.

TABLE 2  
Descriptive Statistics by Context of Reception

Variable	Established Destinations (N = 447)			New Destinations (N = 685)		
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range	Mean	Std. Dev.	Range
LEP parent outreach	0.785	0.319	(0,1)	0.729	0.346	(0,1)
School-based involvement	0.587	0.244	(0,1)	0.548	0.236	(0,1)
Home-based involvement	0.400	0.381	(0,1)	0.383	0.359	(0,1)
Proportion Latino teachers	0.162	0.223	(0,1)	0.042	0.089	(0, 0.965)
Proportion Asian teachers	0.025	0.060	(0, 0.714)	0.015	0.047	(0,0.907)
Proportion black teachers	0.097	0.175	(0, 0.917)	0.146	0.267	(0,1)
Proportion ESL teachers	0.025	0.056	(0, 0.625)	0.019	0.039	(0,0.588)
Latino principal	0.161	0.368	(0,1)	0.069	0.253	(0,1)
Asian principal	0.009	0.094	(0,1)	0.007	0.085	(0,1)
Black principal	0.143	0.351	(0,1)	0.188	0.391	(0,1)
Professional development	2.745	0.494	(1,3.667)	2.737	0.489	(0.666, 3.667)
ESL training	0.394	0.489	(0,1)	0.218	0.413	(0,1)
Charter school	0.058	0.234	(0,1)	0.055	0.229	(0,1)
Magnet school	0.136	0.344	(0,1)	0.092	0.289	(0,1)
Proportion LEP students	0.161	0.216	(0,0.889)	0.085	0.141	(0,1)
Proportion Latino students	0.395	0.326	(0,1)	0.185	0.217	(0,1)
Proportion Asian students	0.061	0.106	(0,0.748)	0.047	0.073	(0,1)
Proportion black students	0.162	0.245	(0,1)	0.224	0.295	(0,1)
Proportion Title 1 students	0.328	0.425	(0,1)	0.206	0.365	(0,1)
Student size (logged)	6.538	0.887	(3.496, 8.429)	6.478	0.898	(2.484, 8.255)
Elementary school	0.633	0.482	(0,1)	0.582	0.494	(0,1)

SOURCE: National Center for Educational Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey, 2003–04.

## Findings

For our multivariate analysis, we estimate separate regression models for the three parent involvement program indexes by the context of reception.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Because the *LEP Parent Outreach* and *Home-Based Involvement* measures are based on only three questions and therefore take on a more limited set of values, we also estimated ordered

Results for parent involvement programs in *Established Destinations* are reported in the first three columns of Table 3, and *New Destinations* are reported in last three columns.

As we hypothesized, the factors associated with the extent of school engagement with parents differ according to whether schools are located in established versus new destinations. Beginning with the role of cultural brokers, what is apparent from the results presented in Table 3 is that these persons are particularly salient in established destinations. For example, increasing the percentage of teachers who specialize in bilingual or ESL education from its minimum to maximum value is associated with an increase of roughly one-half (0.48 percent) of an additional LEP parent outreach program, all other variables held constant. The findings further suggest minority teachers are important in determining the extent of school-based programs: as the proportion of Latino, Asian, and black teachers increases one standard deviation, on average, schools provide an additional quarter (0.20–0.25 percent) of a school-based program.

Interestingly, the effects of the racial/ethnic makeup of teaching faculty have all but vanished in the models of home-based programs, with the exception of the percentage of African-American teachers in established destinations. On the other hand, the racial/ethnic identity of principals appears to matter considerably. In established destinations, having an Asian or African-American principal significantly increases the extent of home-based parent involvement programs, whereas in new destinations, it is black and Latino principals that matter. The fact that these home-based programs are required suggests that principals might play a bigger role here than elsewhere since they have the authority to mandate such policies.

Further, we find support for both hypotheses regarding the effects of African Americans in schools serving immigrants. In both established and new destinations, larger proportions of black teachers are associated with fewer LEP outreach efforts, and these effects are more pronounced in new destinations. Specifically, reducing the proportion of blacks teachers to the minimum (0) results in a 0.10 increase in LEP programs in new destinations, and a 0.05 increase in established destinations. On the other hand, African-American principals are related to greater offerings of school- and home-based programs in new destinations. Given that new destinations are overwhelmingly located in southern states that have historically had large black populations, this finding draws attention to an important contextual difference across immigrant gateways and suggests that African-American principals are exercising leadership in promoting these types of parent involvement.

Turning to teacher training and professional development, we again find relevant and significant difference across contexts of immigrant. For example, both teacher training for ESL/bilingual education and the extent to which

probit models (available on request). Results were nearly identical. For ease of interpretation, we present the Ordinary least squares (OLS) results.

TABLE 3

Programs for Parents, by Context of Reception, (OLS Regression)

	Established Destination			New Destinations		
	LEP Outreach	School-Based Programs	Home-Based Programs	LEP Outreach	School-Based Programs	Home-Based Programs
Proportion Latino teachers	-0.116 (0.083)	0.167** (0.054)	0.088 (0.105)	0.024 (0.139)	0.150 (0.104)	-0.126 (0.151)
Proportion Asian teachers	0.207 (0.170)	0.372* (0.164)	0.147 (0.311)	0.098 (0.169)	-0.071 (0.157)	-0.337 (0.197)
Proportion black teachers	-0.250* (0.122)	0.172* (0.081)	0.382* (0.167)	-0.347** (0.113)	0.049 (0.064)	0.061 (0.102)
Proportion ESL teachers	0.493** (0.187)	0.124 (0.133)	-0.035 (0.320)	0.648 (0.352)	0.353 (0.258)	0.038 (0.378)
Latino principal	0.017 (0.036)	-0.017 (0.026)	0.075 (0.060)	-0.030 (0.043)	0.033 (0.033)	0.133* (0.055)
Asian principal	-0.052 (0.087)	-0.136 (0.083)	0.480*** (0.134)	-0.049 (0.098)	-0.025 (0.095)	-0.127 (0.122)
Black principal	-0.013 (0.043)	-0.015 (0.027)	0.116* (0.058)	-0.022 (0.039)	0.084** (0.031)	0.153*** (0.046)
Professional development	0.032 (0.028)	0.124*** (0.021)	0.125** (0.041)	0.054* (0.026)	0.071*** (0.018)	0.106*** (0.026)
ESL training	0.037 (0.028)	0.007 (0.021)	-0.007 (0.037)	0.063* (0.027)	0.010 (0.020)	0.030 (0.031)
Proportion LEP students	-0.033 (0.084)	0.076 (0.050)	0.085 (0.130)	0.112 (0.113)	0.234** (0.079)	-0.022 (0.154)
Proportion Latino students	0.490*** (0.073)	0.104* (0.049)	-0.060 (0.092)	0.423*** (0.078)	-0.097 (0.055)	0.082 (0.083)
Proportion Asian students	0.477*** (0.122)	0.144 (0.104)	-0.128 (0.206)	0.428** (0.133)	-0.048 (0.115)	-0.087 (0.178)
Proportion black students	0.248** (0.096)	0.035 (0.061)	-0.184 (0.123)	0.341** (0.105)	0.073 (0.061)	0.137 (0.098)
Elementary school	0.050 (0.034)	0.129*** (0.021)	0.135*** (0.039)	0.060* (0.030)	0.113*** (0.018)	0.150*** (0.029)
Charter school	-0.113 (0.068)	0.077 (0.040)	0.123 (0.080)	-0.184** (0.060)	0.042 (0.036)	0.103 (0.057)
Magnet school	0.072* (0.037)	0.022 (0.027)	-0.020 (0.056)	-0.059 (0.046)	0.019 (0.031)	0.004 (0.040)
Proportion Title 1	0.001 (0.033)	0.083** (0.030)	0.067 (0.057)	-0.095* (0.039)	0.091** (0.028)	0.016 (0.046)
Student size (logged)	0.023 (0.016)	0.055*** (0.012)	-0.007 (0.023)	0.068*** (0.017)	0.050*** (0.011)	0.020 (0.015)

TABLE 3—Continued

	Established Destination			New Destinations		
	LEP Outreach	School-Based Programs	Home-Based Programs	LEP Outreach	School-Based Programs	Home-Based Programs
Constant	0.265 (0.139)	-0.351*** (0.102)	-0.047 (0.191)	-0.016 (0.137)	-0.116 (0.080)	-0.216 (0.116)
<i>N</i>	447	447	447	685	685	685
<i>F</i> <sup>2</sup>	0.263	0.431	0.170	0.203	0.270	0.184

NOTE: \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ , two-tailed test. Table entries are OLS regression coefficients with corresponding standard errors in parentheses.

in-service professional development is teacher centered are positively and significantly related to the proportion of LEP parent outreach programs in new immigrant destination schools. These effects are not present in the established destinations model. For school- and home-based programs, it appears that teacher-centered professional development matters irrespective of context of reception, with the effects being somewhat stronger in established destinations. The findings suggest that across various demographic boundaries, providing teachers with opportunities for greater professional development has a positive impact on school-parent relations. Said differently, the consistent, positive relationship between professional development and parent involvement policies across immigrant destinations supports previous work that finds teachers are a key link between policy development and policy implementation.

We also find differences across the two contexts of reception with regard to other school-level attributes. Whereas magnet schools are associated with a significantly greater number of LEP parent outreach programs in established destinations, they are unrelated in new destinations. And, charter schools in new destinations are actually associated with significantly fewer LEP parent outreach programs. This finding is not surprising given that charter and magnet schools function differently in different regions, but at the same time underscores the importance of organizational and other design features in shaping the relationship between parent involvement programs and schools of choice. Interestingly, the effect of school size is positive in new destinations for LEP programs, and in both contexts for school-based programs, suggesting that it is not the communal aspects of small schools (shared norms, greater efficacy) that increase the likelihood of parent programs, but rather the resources and institutional capacity associated with larger schools.

When it comes to variables tapping need, results in Table 3 indicate that the proportion of students of color is positively associated with the proportion of LEP parent programs, regardless of the context of reception. That the proportion of students of color for the most part does not factor into school- and home-based programs underscores the way need may manifest in different parent participation options within schools. Finally, school poverty (percent Title 1) is significant and negatively related to LEP outreach only in the new

destination model, suggesting that the impact of poverty is more acute in schools least equipped to handle a new LEP population.<sup>12</sup> In contrast, the strong, positive effect of the Title 1 coefficient for school-based programs across both contexts of reception is striking. By tying parent involvement programs to federal aid, NCLB creates a strong incentive for schools to implement policies that explicitly promote parent involvement. The evidence reported in Table 3 suggests that these incentives are working, at least for general policies that impact all racial/ethnic groups equally.

## **Discussion and Future Directions**

Using national data from the 2003–04 SASSs, this study examined the types of parent involvement programs schools offer and considered whether and how these vary by different contexts of reception. Our results emphasize the different racial contexts of immigrant destinations and reveal some important ways context can manifest itself when it comes to schooling. One encouraging finding is the strong association between minority principals (both African American and Latino) and parent involvement programing in new destinations, which suggests that principals of color are taking an active role in addressing the needs of immigrant and minority parents. Although much has been written about the racial context of new immigrant destinations and its potential to create greater conflict and competition between immigrant and African-American residents, the findings from this study point to the efficacy of black principals when it comes to the provision of school- and home-based parent involvement programs in new destinations.

Most broadly, our findings demonstrate that the factors associated with parent involvement programs vary in important and predictable ways across new and established immigrant destinations. We find that cultural brokers play a much bigger role in established destinations and that overall, attributes of schools in established destinations are much more strongly associated with the type and magnitude of parent involvement programs schools provide. On the other hand, teacher training and in-service professional development are most consistently associated with these policies in new destination schools. This finding suggests that teachers who do not share linguistic or racial/ethnic backgrounds with their students can nevertheless function in ways similar to cultural brokers (as traditionally defined) as a result of enhanced education, training, and professional development focused on issues of culture, language, and immigration. These results mirror Marrow's (2009) conclusions from her ethnographic study of Hispanic newcomers in rural North Carolina: in addition to hiring bilingual ESL program coordinators and assistants,

<sup>12</sup>Given the large number of poor African Americans in the South, we also tested for the differential effect of Title 1 across schools with large black versus Latino populations. These effects were not significant, suggesting that, at least in our sample, the effect of Title 1 is not conditional on the racial/ethnic composition of schools. We thank one of the anonymous reviewers for alerting us to this possibility.

“public schools’ relatively positive response [to Hispanic newcomers] is also due to bureaucrats’ professional interests—an internal variable intrinsic to local bureaucracies that is distinct from professional norms but that also influences how bureaucracies respond to demographic change” (2009:762; see also Jones-Correa, 2008).

Given the dynamic immigration patterns that are predicted to continue through this century, these findings have important policy implications for both federal and local governments. Attempts to bolster minority teacher recruitment are clearly warranted, and are particularly salient for established destinations. New destinations are least equipped to generate a strong Latino or Asian-American teaching pool, and thus efforts can be directed toward providing teachers with the necessary skills and resources to build strong parent-school relationships. Lastly, the positive effect of Title 1 students on the extent of school-based programs is direct evidence that mandating these programs as part of the NCLB may be an effective incentive for schools.

For more than 100 years, schools have been the first point of institutional contact for immigrants, and as a result, schools play an important role in the incorporation process. The aggregate-level analysis described here suggests several optimistic scenarios with respect to parent involvement, but relies only on data reported from schools. Consequently, what our study cannot tell us is how effective these policies are at actually engaging immigrant and minority parents. Thus, the critical next steps include capturing immigrant parents’ voices and concerns and mapping these to school policies.

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