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RESEARCH ARTICLE



Head Start educators' beliefs about bilingualism, dual language development, and bilingual education

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ABSTRACT

This study employed survey methodology to examine the beliefs of Head Start educators about bilingualism, dual language development, and bilingual education and explored relationships between demographic variables and beliefs. Participants came from two large cities in California, a state that until very recently had a restrictive language policy banning bilingual education. Results indicate that while participants exhibited overall favorable views of bilingualism, responses to several questions related to dual language development and bilingual education were more variable and reflect shifting ideologies regarding bilingualism. Participants who spoke more than one language, were born outside of the United States, and reported an ethnicity other than white, demonstrated more favorable views of bilingual education. Education and major, which have been identified as predictors of favorable beliefs about bilingualism in K-12 settings, were not related to the beliefs of Head Start educators in our sample. The exploration of beliefs about bilingualism and bilingual education is particularly timely given recent research and policy recommendations regarding the long term benefits of bilingualism and the Head Start performance standard requirement that teachers support the development of children's home language and engage in teaching practices that support both bilingualism and biliteracy.

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Dual Language Learners (DLLs) are young children who are learning a second language while still developing basic skills in their home language (Ballantyne, Sanderman, D'Emilio, & McLaughlin, 2008).¹ The term DLL (rather than “bilingual learners” or “emergent bilinguals”) has been adopted by the Office of Head Start and the United States Department of Education to highlight the linguistic competencies of young children ages 0–5 who speak languages other than English (OHS, 2008). When DLLs' home language is supported in early childhood classrooms, it benefits not only their home language development (e.g., Barnett, Yarosz, Thomas, Jung, & Blanco, 2007; Buysse, Peisner-Feinberg, Pérez, Hammer, & Knowles, 2014; Farver, Lonigan, & Eppe, 2009), but also lays the foundation for the acquisition of English (Dixon, Wu, & Daraghmeh, 2012; Hammer, Davison, Lawrence, & Miccio, 2009; MacSwan, 2018; Riches & Genesee, 2006).

Importantly, supporting the development of children's home language also validates their cultural and linguistic identity and, as Genesee, Paradis, and Crago (2004) have cautioned,

Erasing a child's language or cultural patterns of language use is a great loss for the child. Children's identities and sense of self are inextricably linked to the language they speak and to the culture to which they have been

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socialized. They are, even at an early age, speakers of their languages and members of their cultures. Language and culture are essential to children's identities (p. 33).

Recently, several research reports informing the field of Early Childhood Education (ECE), including *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English, Promising Futures* (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2017) and *Transforming the Workforce for Children Birth through Age 8* (National Research Council, 2015), as well as the joint policy statement from the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services and Education (2016) entitled *Supporting the Development of Children who are Dual Language Learners in Early Childhood Programs* have highlighted the importance of home language development and awareness of the benefits of bilingualism.

This is also reflected in the revised Head Start Performance Standards requirement that programs “[...] recognize bilingualism and biliteracy as strengths and implement research-based teaching practices that support their development” (Office of Head Start, 2016, p. 27). Head Start is the largest federally funded child care program in the U.S. and provides comprehensive early childhood education, parent involvement, health, and nutrition services to low-income children and their families, 37% of which are Hispanic/Latino² and 23% of whom speak Spanish in the home (Head Start Program Facts: Fiscal Year, 2017). Although Head Start has long been a champion of building on family strengths, individualizing services to ensure that every child and family feels valued and respected, and recognizing that knowledge of culture and home languages is critical to effective Head Start programming (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010), teachers often struggle with knowing how to promote children's language acquisition in both their home language and English (OHS, 2008). Espinosa (2008, 2013) has noted that although research has greatly informed our knowledge of how children learn two languages and the positive developmental outcomes associated with being bilingual, there continues to be many myths associated with bilingualism and bilingual education in early childhood. These myths are the result of both misunderstandings about how children learn language and the persistent belief that total English immersion is the most effective and desirable way to ensure children become proficient English speakers and successful in school.

The use of children's home language for instruction in the school setting is a controversial and politicized topic in the United States (Aquino-Sterling, Rodríguez-Valls, & Outes, 2017), and beliefs about bilingual education frequently reflect the idea that because the United States is an English-speaking country, English ought to be the language of instruction in schools, including early childhood settings (Garrity, Aquino-Sterling, Van Liew, & Day, 2016). This English-only sentiment became particularly salient in the last decade of the twentieth century, as the move towards restrictive language policies, particularly in states such as California, Arizona, and Massachusetts, essentially eliminated bilingual education for 1.4 million students, 82% of whom were native Spanish speakers. In California, where the current study took place, the recent passage of Proposition 58 lifted the ban on bilingual education in K-12 settings, giving school districts more flexibility to offer bilingual classes to all students. Changes to the law, coupled with the new Head Start Performance Standards requirement and recent research reports and policy recommendations, signal a fundamental shift in expectations for how early childhood programs should best serve children who speak languages other than English at home.

Horenczyk and Tatar (2002) have proposed that teachers' attitudes towards, and behaviors with, children from culturally diverse backgrounds tend to mirror, and be affected by the values and norms of both educational settings and the larger society (2002). It is thus critical to examine the beliefs of teachers and other staff working with young dual language learners and their families about bilingualism and bilingual education, especially in states with a history of restrictive language policies. Similar to Espinosa's (2008, 2013) use of the term “myth”, Nespore (1987) has proposed that teacher beliefs are subjective, evaluative, and affective, and they often reflect what teachers assume to be true about learning, learners, the learning environment, and the content being learned (Kagan, 1992). Pettit (2013), in her review of the literature on K-12 teacher beliefs about English

Language Learners, asserted that addressing teacher beliefs is essential if we are to improve the outcomes of DLLs. To address this need within the context of ECE, the purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs of Head Start teachers and other program staff responsible for working with young children and their families in southern California about bilingualism, dual language development, and bilingual education. By examining the beliefs of those currently working in the field of ECE, this work complements and expands perspectives on our previous analyses of beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual education, and dual language development of early childhood preservice teachers raised in a Prop 227 environment (Garrity et al., 2016).

Early childhood teacher beliefs about bilingualism

Although the majority of research on teacher beliefs about working with children who speak a language other than English at home has been conducted in K-12 settings, several researchers have examined teacher beliefs about bilingualism and bilingual education in early childhood settings. Garrity and Guerra (2015) explored beliefs about classroom language use of two Head Start teachers to gain insight into how teacher beliefs influence language of instruction. Analysis of teacher interviews and assessments of classroom language use indicated that teachers had different beliefs about bilingual education and that these beliefs were translated into classroom practice. One teacher clearly espoused and implemented an immersion approach to teaching the children English, while the other believed in the value of supporting the home language and actively encouraged bilingualism in her classroom. As a result, children had very different experiences with language depending on their classroom placement and the beliefs of their teacher. When asked to describe their practices, teachers in this study drew on their very different life experiences to explain their teaching methods, including the age they came to the United States and whether or not they participated in ESL classes. Results from this study reflect McCarty's (2011) assertion that teachers often act as local language policy makers via the decisions they make about language use in their classroom.

Sawyer et al. (2016) studied teachers' use of linguistically responsive practices with Spanish-speaking DLL's in federally and state funded preschool programs serving low-income children in two states. They also examined teacher beliefs about language and culture and teachers' Spanish proficiency to determine their relationship to classroom practices. Results indicated that, overall, teachers' beliefs about language and culture were in line with the literature. Teachers believed in the importance of families speaking their home language to their children and disagreed that English should be the only language spoken in school. They agreed that children benefit when they learn about other cultures and languages and did not feel that bilingual children need special education services more frequently than their monolingual English speaking peers. Participants were not sure, however, if the same school program works for bilingual and monolingual English-speaking children, with 42% disagreeing and 59% agreeing with this statement, perhaps reflecting the hegemonic discourse that English should be the only language spoken in schools. Teacher beliefs were not associated with linguistically responsive language and literacy practices, and the authors reported that teachers, including those who spoke Spanish, implemented few responsive practices that supported the bilingual development of preschool DLLs. Given our focus on how macrosystemic belief systems influence teacher beliefs, it is important to note that Sawyer et al. (2016) provided anecdotal evidence indicating varying levels of administrative support for DLLs based on the geographic location of the program under investigation. Administrative support for classroom use of Spanish was moderate to high in the southeastern state, while support in the northeastern state ranged from low to high, with one center administrator explicitly discouraging the use of Spanish. When interpreting this, Sawyer et al. (2016) noted that bilingual teachers' instructional practices are often influenced by the message they receive from the broader community that English should be the only language spoken in classrooms (Cummins, 2000).

Bernstein et al. (2018) used the construct of linguistic ideologies (Silverstein, 1979) to explore how ideologies are learned cultural practices that serve to foreground the intersection of language and power (Irvine, 1989). Bernstein et al. (2018) studied the linguistic ideologies of 28 early childhood teachers in Arizona during their first month transitioning from an English-only to a dual immersion language program. Similar to California, Arizona voters passed a restrictive language policy (Prop 203) in 2000, and while these restrictions apply only to K-12 classrooms, there exists the perception that Arizona is an “English-only” state (Fredricks & Warriner, 2016; Heineke, 2015). Results indicated that although teachers held primarily pro-multilingual ideologies, different ideologies were correlated with different teacher experiences. For example, teachers with a bachelor’s degree or higher held significantly more favorable views of multilingualism than teachers with less education, and teacher knowledge of terminology related to dual language education also predicted favorable views. Teachers’ age and years of experience teaching were related to the view that multiple languages in the classrooms are a problem. The authors noted that these findings are not surprising given that teachers in their sample had only taught in English-only settings. Interestingly, Spanish speaking teachers in their sample were not significantly more pro-multilingual than monolingual teachers, which contradicts the findings of researchers in K-12 settings who have identified a relationship between being bilingual and positive beliefs about bilingualism (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning, 1997; Fitzsimmons-Doolan, Palmer, & Henderson, 2017; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014). Bernstein et al. (2018) proposed that their finding highlights the complex relationship between beliefs and language backgrounds, particularly in states with restrictive language policies and assimilationist discourses (de Jong, 2013). This complexity was also evident in our study of preservice teachers, all of whom had attended public school in California following the passage of proposition 227 (Garrity et al., 2016). Although participants in our sample held favorable views of bilingualism and possessed knowledge of dual language development that was in line with the research, their beliefs about the role of the home language in the school setting often reflected the English-only sentiment despite the fact that almost 40% of our participants considered themselves Hispanic or Latino and 27% spoke Spanish.

K-12 teacher beliefs about bilingualism

Research on the beliefs of K-12 teachers has identified several predictors associated with favorable views about bilingualism, including being bilingual (Byrnes et al., 1997; Coady, Harper, & de Jong, 2011; Flores & Smith, 2009; García-Nevarez, Stafford, & Arias, 2005; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Shin & Krashen, 1996). Similarly, having experience with children whose home language is not English has been associated with more positive beliefs (Byrnes et al., 1997; Flores & Smith, 2009; Gándara, Rumberger, Maxwell-Jolly, & Callahan, 2003; Shin & Krashen, 1996). Racial and ethnic background has also been shown to predict teachers’ abilities to provide an inclusive environment for linguistically and culturally diverse students (Dee, 2004; 2005; Egalite, Kisida, & Winters, 2015), and García-Nevarez et al. (2005) found that Latino teachers tended to have more positive attitudes toward English Learners than non-Latino teachers. Similarly, Flores (2001), examined the beliefs of 176 bilingual teachers in pre-kindergarten through 5th grade, and concluded that teacher beliefs were socially constructed, and that a shared ethnic identity helped them to better meet the needs of the children in their classroom.

Research questions

The goal of this study was to add to the limited data on beliefs of early childhood educators about bilingualism, bilingual education, and dual language development. This examination is particularly timely given recent policy recommendations regarding the long term benefits of bilingualism, as well as the Head Start performance standard requirement that the program support both bilingualism and biliteracy. Because the evidence reviewed above suggests that teachers in ECE and K-12 settings hold their own beliefs, values, knowledge, assumptions, and attitudes about bilingualism based on their own life experiences, we also sought to examine how the experiences of Head Start staff are related to their beliefs. As such, the study is framed from the perspective of the following research questions:

- (1) 1. What are the beliefs of Head Start educators about bilingualism, dual language development and bilingual education?
- (2) 2. Are demographic variables (e.g. age, ethnicity, birthplace, home language, immigration history, education level, major, and position) related to Head Start educators' beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual education, and dual language development?

Methods

Participants

Participants were 291 Head Start staff members working in two programs located in large, urban cities in southern California. The majority of participants were female (91.8%, $n = 267$) and worked directly with children as teachers or home visitors (78.3%, $n = 196$), and 21% ($n = 61$) were in leadership positions as program administrators. Just over 53% ($n = 156$) had a master's or bachelor's degree, and 23% ($n = 68$) had an associate's degree. It is important to highlight the ethnic and linguistic diversity of our sample: 63% of participants ($n = 182$) identified as Hispanic/Latino, almost 69% of our participants were bilingual ($n = 200$) and 8% ($n = 23$) reported speaking 3 languages. Just over half of our participants were born in another country (51.1%, $n = 143$) and 42% remembered participating in ESL classes. While 16% ($n = 45$) of our participants were born in Mexico, 35% ($n = 98$) were born in another country, and raw survey data indicated that participants came from 27 different countries (including the U.S.) and spoke 27 different languages (including English and Spanish). While this is not surprising given the geographic location in which this study took place, it is noteworthy given the need to explore the beliefs of early childhood teachers who participate in diverse and overlapping cultural communities (Garrity, Shapiro, Longstreth, & Bailey, 2019). Additional demographic information is presented in Table 1.

Measurement tool

Participants were first asked to complete a demographic questionnaire designed to obtain information about their 1) age; 2) ethnicity; 3) birthplace; 4) home language; 5) age when arrived in the US; 6) participation in ESL; 7) education level; 8) major; and 9) position in Head Start.

The Beliefs about Bilingualism Survey (Garrity et al., 2016) was used to assess the beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual education, and knowledge of dual language development of Head Start staff. Sixteen questions assessing beliefs about bilingualism and dual language development were developed following a review of the pertinent literature related to bilingualism in infancy and early childhood, drawing heavily from the work of Espinosa (2008, 2013), Goldenberg (2008), and Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (2009). Five questions related to linguistic ideology (Kroskrity, 2004) were also included to assess students' beliefs about bilingual education. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with each item using a 5-point Likert Scale, ranging from 1 "strongly agree" to 5 "strongly disagree". Example items included: *Children who are fluent in two languages possess certain cognitive advantages in comparison to children who are fluent in one language*; *Young infants' brains are only equipped to learn one language*, and *We live in the United States, so English should be the main language taught to children*. Garrity et al. (2016) reported acceptable internal consistency for this tool, with a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .787. Data from the current study indicated good internal consistency, $\alpha = .82$.

Procedures

Upon approval from our university's Institutional Review Board, the first author contacted the directors of two large Head Start grantees in southern California to determine if they were interested in having their program participate in the study. One grantee director requested that the survey be sent electronically to all Head Start staff members responsible for working with children ages 0–5

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of participants.

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Gender		
Female	267	91.8%
Male	4	1.4%
Age		
21–30	42	14.6%
31–40	60	20.8%
41–50	88	30.6%
51–60	76	26.4%
61–70	21	7.3%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	182	63.2%
White	37	12.8%
African American	24	.08%
Asian	24	.08%
Biracial	5	.02%
Native American	6	.02%
Pacific Islander	1	.003%
Other	9	.03%
How many languages spoken		
1	61	21%
2	200	68.7%
3	23	7.9%
4	3	1%
Home language		
English	90	30.9%
Spanish	151	51.9%
Other	41	14.1%
English and Spanish	6	2.1%
Birthplace		
California	112	38.5%
Other U.S. state	25	8.9%
Mexico	45	16.1%
Other country	98	35%
Age when came to U.S. (if applicable)	<i>n</i> = 130	
0–10	36	12.4%
11–20	49	16.8%
21–30	28	9.6%
31–40	13	4.5%
41–50	4	1.7%
Did you take ESL classes as a child?	<i>n</i> = 209	
Yes	121	41.6%
No	88	30.2%
Education level		
PhD	1	.3
Master degree	26	8.9
Bachelor degree	130	44.7
Associate degree	68	23.4
Children's center permit	23	7.9
High school	26	8.9
Other	1	.3
GED	3	1.0
Major		
ECE/Child development	103	
Elementary/special education	9	
Social/human services	31	
Business	6	
Other	17	
Position		
Assistant/aid	24	8.2%
Associate teacher	60	20.6%
Teacher	98	33.7%
Home visitor	14	15.8%
Clerical/administrative support	8	2.8%

(Continued)

Table 1. (Continued).

Demographic Characteristic	Frequency (f)	Percent (%)
Family support/advocate	18	6.2%
Center director/assistant director	46	15.8%
Program support/specialist/coach	10	3.4%
Program director/CEO	5	1.7%
Other	4	1.4%

and their families, including education, family services, and administrative staff. The program's school readiness manager emailed the survey and an explanation of its purpose via *Qualtrics*, an electronic survey platform. Participants were required to provide informed consent prior to beginning the survey and a response was requested in 2 weeks' time. We received 180 responses from the on-line survey. Eleven of these were excluded from analysis because they were incomplete, for a final number of 169 participants. Data were uploaded into the *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) to allow for the statistical analysis of data.

The second grantee director recommended that we distribute pen and paper surveys to teaching staff, including administrative and education support staff (coaches, program specialists) during a regularly scheduled professional development day. In the morning, the first and third authors attended an event being held for teachers serving preschool aged children. The first author explained the purpose of the study prior to the start of the event, which was a "teacher appreciation" activity during which groups of teachers showcased their work on tables located in a large conference hall. The researchers were also provided with a table, and participants stopped by to complete the informed consent document and survey throughout the morning. One member of the research team remained at the table while the other walked around and asked teachers if they were interested in completing the survey. In the afternoon, the first author attended a professional development session being provided to Early Head Start teachers. Prior to the beginning of the session, the first author explained the purpose of the study and passed out the informed consent document and survey. A total of 125 surveys were collected and three were not included because they were incomplete. Results from 122 pen and paper surveys were also entered into SPSS.

Data analysis

To address the purposes of this study, survey data were first analyzed using frequency counts. The responses were grouped into three categories by combining the "Strongly Agree" and "Somewhat Agree" responses as well as the "Strongly Disagree" and "Somewhat Disagree" categories. The third category was "Neither Agree/Disagree".

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was then used to determine whether there were differences in how demographic groups answered the survey questions. Five of the survey items were chosen for this analysis based on the variability of responses. Nine demographic variables were included: 1) age; 2) ethnicity; 3) birthplace; 4) home language; 5) age when came to US; 6) participation in ESL; 7) education level; 8) major; and 9) position. See [Table 1](#) for the categories used for each of these variables. Some categories were not included in the analysis due to the small number of responses. These included the Pacific Islander category in ethnic groups, Ph.D.s. and the "other" category under "education level."

Results

Head start teacher beliefs about bilingualism, dual language learning, and bilingual education

Descriptive data on early childhood educator beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual education, and dual language development are presented in [Table 2](#). Frequency counts indicated that, overall,

Table 2. Early childhood educators' beliefs about bilingualism, bilingual education, and dual language learning.

Question	Strongly/ somewhat agree (f)/%	Neither agree/ disagree (f)/%	Strongly/ somewhat disagree (f)/%
1. Children who are fluent in two languages possess certain cognitive advantages in comparison to children who are fluent in one language	238 82.6%	24 8.3%	26 10%
2. Bilingual children are better at problem solving, demonstrate greater creativity, and have more tolerant attitudes towards members of another culture.	203 70.2%	51 17.6%	35 12.2%
3. Learning two languages simultaneously puts babies at risk for having delayed and possibly impaired language development.	0 0%	30 12%	219 87.9
4. Learning two languages simultaneously at an early age causes children to feel culturally and socially out of place as they do not know which culture to identify with.	0 0%	31 12.7%	213 87.3%
5. High levels of bilingualism can lead to practical, career related advantages.	267 92.7%	10 3.5%	11 3.8%
6. Children who are bilingual tend to be more culturally sensitive and can take on the perspective of others.	214 73.8%	41 14.1%	35 12.1%
7. It is necessary to maintain a child's primary language and culture.	256 88.3%	18 6.2%	16 5.5%
8. Acquiring two languages simultaneously confuses babies and impairs their cognitive ability.	0 0%	34 14%	209 86%
9. Acquiring two languages simultaneously at an early age could hinder a child's social development.	196 82%	43 18%	0 0%
10. It would be confusing for English speaking children to be spoken to and taught in both English and Spanish.	0 0%	36 15.2%	201 84.8%
11. Teacher-caregivers should refrain from alternating languages when speaking to babies otherwise babies run the risk of not acquiring either language well.	0 0%	27 11.6%	206 88.4%
12. Dual language learning should start as early as possible because infants and toddlers are more adept to learning languages than older children and adults.	260 90.6%	10 3.5%	17 5.9%
13. Young infants' brains are only equipped to learn one language.	0 0%	14 5.2%	257 94.8%
14. Young children who are bilingual will not be able to separate their two languages, meaning they will not know which language to use, when interacting with new people in their community	0 0%	27 10.4%	233 89.7%
15. All infants, at birth, have an innate capacity to learn more than one language.	24 8.4%	16 5.6%	248 86.2%
16. Speaking a language other than English to children will hurt their chances for academic success in this country.	0 0%	18 6.8%	248 93.3%
17. It is a waste of taxpayer's and parent's money to pay for dual language programs for young children.	0 0%	29 11%	235 89.1%
18. We live in the United States, so English should be the main language taught to children.	87 30.1%	28 9.7%	174 60.3%
19. Cultural awareness and sensitivity are important characteristics for children to have.	271 94.1%	9 3.1%	8 2.8%
20. Supporting only the use of English in education is a form of prejudice.	138 47.9%	65 22.6%	85 29.5%
21. Learning a second language with children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds will result in poor language skills.	237 90.1%	26 9.9%	0 0%

participants had very high levels of agreement on survey items, with over 80% of Head Start staff reporting that they strongly/somewhat agreed on 17 of the 21 items, and a 74% agreement on one of the items. While overall survey responses indicated knowledge of dual language development that was in line with the research-base in the field and favorable views of bilingualism, there were five questions with more variable responses: Although 70% ($n = 203$) of participants indicated they somewhat or strongly agreed with Item 2: *Bilingual children are better at problem solving, demonstrate greater creativity, and have more tolerant attitudes towards members of another culture*, 18% ($n = 51$) neither agreed nor disagreed and 12.2% ($n = 35$) strongly/somewhat disagreed with this statement. Over 18% ($n = 43$) of respondents stated they neither agreed/disagreed with Item 9:

Acquiring two languages simultaneously at an early age could hinder a child's social development, and 15% (n = 36) neither agreed/disagreed with Item 10: It would be confusing for English speaking children to be spoken to and taught in both English and Spanish.

Two questions intended to assess participant's beliefs about bilingual education were also more evenly distributed. Just over 60% (n = 174) of participants somewhat/strongly disagreed with Item 18: *We live in the United States, so English should be the main language taught to children*, while 30% (n = 87) somewhat/strongly agreed with this statement and almost 10% (n = 28) neither agreed/disagreed. The statement with the greatest variability pertained to Item 20: *Supporting only the use of English in education is a form of prejudice*, with close to 50% (47.9%, n = 138) strongly/somewhat agreeing, 23% (n = 65) neither agreeing/disagreeing, and 30% strongly/somewhat disagreeing (n = 85). Results from our analysis of variance (ANOVA) indicated several demographic variables that were significantly related to three of the survey items. These relationships are described below.

Ethnicity

There was a significant effect of ethnicity in response to the statement, *Bilingual children are better at problem solving, demonstrate greater creativity, and have more tolerant attitudes towards members of another culture* at the $p < .05$ level for the seven ethnic groups ($F(6, 280) = 8.48, p = .00$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the Hispanic/Latino respondents (M = 4.18, SD = 1.04) was significantly different than the White respondents (M = 3.49, SD = 1.24), African American respondents (M = 2.71, SD = 1.20), and for the respondents who chose "other" (M = 3.00, SD = 1.66). There was also a significant difference between African American respondents (M = 2.71, SD = 1.20) and Asian respondent (M = 4.08, SD = 1.10).

There was also a significant effect of ethnicity in response to the statement, *We live in the U.S., so English should be the main language taught to children* at the $p < .05$ level for the seven ethnic groups ($F(6, 280) = 7.01, p = .00$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the Hispanic/Latino respondents (M = 2.01, SD = 1.44) was significantly different than the White respondents (M = 3.43, SD = 1.48), and for the Native American respondents (M = 4.17, SD = 0.98).

Home language

There was a significant effect of home language on responses to the statement, *Bilingual children are better at problem solving, demonstrate greater creativity, and have more tolerant attitudes towards members of another culture* at the $p < .05$ level for the four categories ($F(3, 283) = 19.36, p = .000$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those whose home language was English (M = 3.15, SD = 1.29) was significantly different than for those whose home language was Spanish (M = 4.26, SD = 0.96), and those whose home language was in the other category (M = 4.02, SD = 1.26).

There was also a significant effect of home language on responses to the statement, *It would be confusing for English speaking children to be spoken to and taught in both English and Spanish* at the $p < .05$ level for the four categories ($F(3, 282) = 5.93, p = .01$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those whose home language was English (M = 2.31, SD = 1.28) was significantly different than for those whose home language was Spanish (M = 1.87, SD = 1.15).

There was a significant effect of home language on responses to the statement, *We live in the U.S., so English should be the main language taught to children* at the $p < .05$ level for the four categories ($F(3, 283) = 15.04, p = .000$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those whose home language was Spanish (M = 1.85, SD = 1.32) was significantly different than for those whose home language was English (M = 3.02, SD = 1.65) or a language other than Spanish or English (M = 3.07, SD = 1.68).

Birthplace

There was a significant effect of birthplace on responses to the statement, *Bilingual children are better at problem solving, demonstrate greater creativity, and have more tolerant attitudes towards members of another culture* at the $p < .05$ level for the four categories ($F(3, 275) = 8.03, p = .00$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for Hispanic/Latino participants born in Mexico ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.05$) was significantly different than for Hispanic/Latino participants born in CA ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.30$), or another U.S. state ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.25$). There was also a significant difference between those born in a state other than CA ($M = 3.16, SD = 1.25$) and those born in another country ($M = 4.04, SD = 1.15$). There was also a significant effect of birthplace on responses to the statement, *We live in the U.S., so English should be the main language taught to children* at the $p < .05$ level for the four categories ($F(3, 275) = 7.87, p = .00$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those born in Mexico ($M = 1.92, SD = 1.37$) was significantly different than for those born in a state other than CA ($M = 3.24, SD = 1.59$) and those born in another country ($M = 2.98, SD = 1.71$).

ESL

There was a significant effect of having participated in ESL on responses to the statement, *Bilingual children are better at problem solving, demonstrate greater creativity, and have more tolerant attitudes towards members of another culture* at the $p < .05$ level for the two categories ($F(1, 207) = 8.70, p = .004$). Participants who took ESL classes ($M = 4.28, SD = 1.09$) were more likely to agree with the statement than those who had not ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.16$).

Age arrived in US

There was a significant effect of the age in which participants arrived in the U.S. on responses to the statement, *It would be confusing for English speaking children to be spoken to and taught in both English and Spanish* at the $p < .05$ level for the five categories ($F(4, 125) = 2.81, p = .03$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those who came to the U.S. when they were 41 to 50 years old ($M = 3.40, SD = 1.14$) was significantly different than those who arrived when they were 11–20 years old ($M = 1.71, SD = 0.96$), 21–30 years old ($M = 1.79, SD = 1.32$), and 31–40 years old ($M = 1.69, SD = 1.25$).

There was a significant effect of the age that they came to the U.S. on responses to the statement, *We live in the U.S., so English should be the main language taught to children* at the $p < .05$ level for the five categories ($F(4, 125) = 4.29, p = .003$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for those who came to the U.S. when they were 41 to 50 years old ($M = 4.20, SD = 1.30$) was significantly different than those who arrived when they were 0–10 years old ($M = 1.86, SD = 1.29$), and 11–20 years old ($M = 1.96, SD = 1.37$).

Age

There was a significant effect of age on responses to the statement, *We live in the U.S., so English should be the main language taught to children* at the $p < .05$ level for the five age groups ($F(4, 280) = 5.58, p = .00$). Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for the responses for 21–30 year olds ($M = 1.86, SD = 1.32$) was significantly different than the 51–60 year olds ($M = 2.82, SD = 1.71$) and 61–70 year olds ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.50$). The mean score for the responses for 31–40 year olds ($M = 2.07, SD = 1.40$) was also significantly different than the 51–60 year olds ($M = 2.82, SD = 1.71$) and 61–70 year olds ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.50$). The mean score for the responses for 41–50 year olds ($M = 2.31, SD = 1.59$) was significantly different than the 61–70 year olds ($M = 3.38, SD = 1.50$).

There were no statistically significant results on these five items based on education level, major, or position. There were no significant differences based on demographic variables for Item 9: *Acquiring two languages simultaneously at an early age could hinder a child's social development* or Question 20: *Supporting only the use of English in education is a form of prejudice*.

Discussion

Pajares (1992) has proposed that teacher beliefs are the compass that guide the decisions teachers make on a daily basis, and many researchers interested in improving teaching and learning have cited the importance of teacher beliefs on practice (Calderhead, 1996; Fang, 1996; McCarty, Abbott-Shim, & Lambert, 2001; Nesper, 1987; Richardson, 1994). In response to new policy recommendations regarding best practices for serving DLLs and the expectation that Head Start programs support children to become bilingual and biliterate, the purpose of this study was to examine the beliefs of Head Start staff, the majority of whom were teachers, about bilingualism, dual language learning, and bilingual education. We were specifically interested in examining the beliefs of educators working in a state that until very recently had a restrictive language policy that required English-only instruction in public school settings.

Overall, participants in our sample reported favorable views about bilingualism, and responses indicated that participants held beliefs that are in line with current research, policy, and practice recommendations in the field. We found similar results in our earlier work using the Beliefs about Bilingualism survey (Garrity et al., 2016), in which we examined the beliefs of preservice teachers who attended school in California while Proposition 227 was in effect. The students we surveyed also expressed overall favorable views of bilingualism and held beliefs about dual language learning that reflected the research, similar to the results of Sawyer et al. (2016) who reported that teachers in their study exhibited beliefs about language and culture that were aligned with current research.

Responses to several survey items, however, highlighted misunderstandings about dual language development, as well as subtractive and monoglossic language ideologies embodied by Proposition 227. Although the majority of participants believed that alternating languages when speaking to young children would not place them at risk, some were unsure if learning two languages in early childhood would hinder children's social development. This uncertainty regarding young children's abilities to manage two language systems reflects misunderstandings related to *simultaneous* (as opposed to *sequential*) development of two languages and suggests that some participants were unaware that, provided appropriate exposure, simultaneous bilingual children go through the same stages of language acquisition and reach the same milestones in language development as monolingual children (Bauer & Gort, 2011). In addition, they might not know that although bilingual children may have somewhat different patterns of development in certain aspects of language (e.g., vocabulary) in the short term, bilingual children can and do acquire the same level of proficiency over time as monolingual children (Genesee & Nicoladis, 2006). This finding recalls the assertion made by the Office of Head Start (2008) that teachers need additional support in understanding how children acquire a first and second language, and is not surprising given the limited professional development focused on teaching DLLs (Castro, Garcia, & Markos, 2013).

Although bilingualism is not generally framed as a factor that affords greater cognitive, creative and/or affective advantages for *minoritized* children in the United States (Macías, 2014), 70 percent of participants in our study were aware that bilingual children are often more tolerant, creative and better at problem solving than their monolingual peers. This is most likely due to the diversity of our sample: 76 percent of participants spoke two or more languages, half were born in another country, and 42 percent had participated in ESL classes. Additionally, participants came from two large, urban cities located close to the U.S. Mexico border, and our findings support the anecdotal evidence provided by Sawyer et al. (2016) indicating that the geographic location of a program may influence beliefs about and support for bilingual programs. Importantly, however, despite the diversity of our

sample, almost 20% of respondents were unsure about this statement, perhaps pointing to the confusion inherent in a shifting policy context.

Our examination of the relationship between demographic variables and survey responses served to foreground the intractability of monoglossic language ideologies that value monolingualism over bilingualism and fail to address the competencies needed in a global and increasingly interdependent society (García, 2009). Proposition 227 framed bilingual education as a threat to children's, and the nation's, well-being (Katznelson & Bernstein, 2017), and embodied the language as a problem orientation described by Thomas and Collier (1984). This ideological stance was evident in our examination of the relationship between demographic variables and participant responses. For example, participants whose home language was English and those who were older when they came to the U.S. were more likely to agree that speaking to and teaching English speaking children in Spanish would confuse them, reflecting the "English-only as a means of protecting students" intent of restrictive language policies. Similar to the results of our study with preservice teachers (Garrity et al., 2016), Hispanic/Latino participants were more likely to agree that bilingual children may have cognitive and social advantages. Participation in ESL classes, having a home language other than English, and being born in Mexico were also related to Head Start educator's positive views about the competencies of bilingual children.

Despite overall positive views of bilingualism, participants had much more variable responses to the questions designed to assess beliefs about bilingual education, and these patterns of responses reflect the dominant U.S. ideology of monolingualism and English-only instruction that are endemic to restrictive language policies rooted in hegemonic discourses of national unity and ethnic/racial supremacy (Flores, 2016). Just over half of participants did not know how they felt about or disagreed that supporting English-only education was a form of prejudice, a finding similar to the results of our study of preservice teachers, the majority of whom were Hispanic/Latino. There were no demographic variables related to this question either in the current study or our earlier study with preservice teachers, and given the nuances associated with the term "prejudice", this is perhaps a topic best explored via qualitative analysis.

Forty percent of participants agreed with or were unsure how they felt about the statement *We live in the United States, so English should be the main language taught to children*, again reflecting the hegemonic aspect of Proposition 227. Responses to this statement were related to five of the demographic variables, including ethnicity, home language, birthplace, participation in ESL classes, age, and age when they came to the U.S. Hispanic/Latino respondents and those whose home language was Spanish were more likely to disagree with this statement than were participants who were White or Native American and had a home language of English or another language. These findings related to ethnicity and language are in line with earlier research suggesting that a shared racial and ethnic background is related to teachers' positive views of bilingual students and their increased ability to meet their needs in the classroom (Flores, 2001; García-Nevarez et al., 2005) and that being bilingual is related to positive beliefs about bilingualism (Byrnes, Kiger, & Manning 1996; Fitzsimmons-Doolan et al., 2017; Lee & Oxelson, 2006; Rader-Brown & Howley, 2014). Similar to the results of Bernstein et al. (2018), teacher age was related to the belief that English should be the only language spoken in school, with younger participants being more likely to disagree with this statement. Bernstein and colleagues indicated (2018) findings about age are not surprising given that older individuals have lived with English-only for a longer period of time, and we also found that respondents who were older when they immigrated to the United States were more likely to agree that teaching English speaking children in two languages would be confusing and that English should be the only language spoken in school, perhaps following in the tradition of assimilation (rather than acculturation) as a sign of national loyalty and unity.

We found it interesting that the variables of education and major, which are typically associated with teacher beliefs, were not significant. Education and major has been associated with early childhood teacher beliefs about other types of best practice recommendations in the field, such as developmentally appropriate practices (e.g. File & Gullo, 2002; McMullen and Alat

(2002), and data on predictors of favorable beliefs about bilingualism in K-12 settings underscore the importance of specific university preparation in helping teachers effectively serve children whose first language is not English (Byrnes et al., 1997; Coady et al., 2011; Faltis & Valdés, 2016; Flores, 2001; Flores & Smith, 2009; García-Nevarez et al., 2005; Karathanos 2009; Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzales 2008; Lucas & Villegas 2011). Similarly, Bernstein et al. (2018) reported that teachers with a bachelor's degree or higher held significantly more favorable views of multilingualism than teachers with less education. Our data, however, suggest that participants drew on personal experiences related to their own cultural, linguistic and ethnic identities and immigration history rather than on knowledge learned through education when formulating their beliefs. The limited qualitative data examining ECE teacher beliefs about bilingualism indicate that teachers tend to use their own experiences when making judgements about language in the classroom (Garrity & Guerra, 2015), and qualitative data collected by Bernstein et al. (2018) found that teachers often recounted past experiences to support their ideological positions and to justify pro-multilingual beliefs. Again, that the beliefs of early childhood educators are related to personal experiences is not surprising given the limited attention in the ECE field relevant to how to best serve DLLs (Castro et al., 2013).

Implications for practice

Although our results indicating favorable views of bilingualism provide evidence of progress in the field and suggest a positive step towards a more pluralistic and democratic society, it is imperative that we not oversimplify our findings. In order to prepare early childhood educators with the relevant knowledge, skills, and orientations needed for meeting the needs of dual language learners, it is imperative that professional development efforts and university coursework move beyond research-based understandings of the benefits of bilingualism and content knowledge about how children acquire first and second languages. Our findings suggest an urgent need for Head Start programs, as well as early childhood teacher education programs tasked with preparing the workforce, to adopt a critical stance that highlights connections between race, language, and power in education and engages preservice students and current practitioners in activities designed to encourage critical thinking and self-reflection. While this is especially important for those who are monolingual, White, and live in areas of the country where they are not exposed to bilingual/dual language learners, our data also suggest uncertainty about bilingual education despite our participants' diversity in terms of ethnicity/race and linguistic background. To this end, we recommend that efforts to support the early childhood workforce include a strong foundation in (a) a sociocultural perspective on first and second language acquisition (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006); (b) early bilingualism and biliteracy development (Bauer & Gort, 2012; Tabors, 2008); (c) heteroglossic, dynamic, and active (rather than just "additive") notions of bilingualism and bilingual acquisition (Cummins, 2017; García, 2009), and (d) critical perspectives on language in education (Rolstad, 2014) and bilingual education (Cervantes-Soon, 2014; Flores, 2016; Flores & García, 2017; Katznelson & Bernstein, 2017). Moreover, we must continue to assess the beliefs of early childhood educators in order to advance inclusion and democratic pedagogies and support the workforce in light of new demographic imperatives and a shifting policy context. Ultimately, a desirable and ethical goal is for all Head Start programs to provide an education that will both value and foster bilingualism and biliteracy for all children.

Notes

1. We employ the term "Home Language" in order to align with usage in the *Head Start Performance Standards*. However, it is important to keep in mind this term has the potential to alienate children's languages to the boundaries of home.
2. Although we use the term "Hispanic/Latino" to remain faithful to the constructs employed in our survey, we recognize that "Latinx" is a more inclusive way of framing the Hispanic/Latinx population.

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