Introduction—Context and Arc of the Work

This chapter will address the use of collaborative, community-based, participatory methodology as a means of not only delivering information to parents as consumers of information, but also, and more importantly, recognizing parent knowledge and fostering parent leadership. Parents are the producers of enduring knowledge for their own children as well as vital conduits of knowledge for their community. By attending to parent knowledge in systemic ways, early childhood education and community supports move beyond token parent contributions and marginalized parent influence. When engaged in authentic problem-solving, parents become leaders who can contribute in meaningful and productive ways.

Our scholarly work in dynamic inquiry draws from the rich legacy of practitioner-based inquiry, valuing local knowledge and belief in human capacity and agency writ large. Young children, early care educators, and parents are understood to be the stewards of their lives and operating in a context. Included within this area of scholarship has been our three years of research with parent leaders. Thus, our scholarly work in dynamic inquiry has not only been vested in community-specific contexts, but also serves as a form of capacity building. This scholarly effort has been formalized in the Parent Inquiry Initiative, known as Parentii (see http://www.hartford.edu/parentii for more information), as part of the Institute for Translational Research (ITR) at the University of Hartford as an outgrowth of Bray’s original work in teacher inquiry. The ITR serves as a college-wide umbrella for collaborative research activities promoting academic excellence through relevant, community-engaging research and scholarship. This research reinforces the importance of early childhood education by linking research and programming, specifically research methods foregrounding parents and community. The establishment of Parentii furthers the understanding of