NEW AMERICANS' PERSPECTIVES ON RETENTION AND ADAPTATION OF CHILDREARING PRACTICES IN VERMONT: BUILDING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

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NEW AMERICANS’ PERSPECTIVES ON RETENTION AND ADAPTATION OF CHILDREARING PRACTICES IN VERMONT: BUILDING INTERCULTURAL RELATIONSHIPS

A Thesis
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
International Family and Community Studies

by
Julie Lynn Richards
May 2015

Accepted by:
Dr. James McDonell, Chair
Dr. Jitka Dvorakova
Dr. Susan Limber
Dr. Mark Small
ABSTRACT

With the prevalence of global migration, many communities are becoming increasingly diverse. However, along with the benefits of diversity, cultural divides can emerge. Members of the dominant culture may not be familiar with, nor understand, cultural practices of the newly arrived community member, and vice versa. This dissertation research sought to identify various cultural childrearing practices as well as New Americans’ perspectives on childrearing within Vermont. Barriers and supports for cultural retention and adaptation were identified, along with potential contributions that New Americans can offer their communities in understanding who they are and what they bring to the childrearing experience.
DEDICATION

To the New Americans whom I have met through this dissertation process, and those I have yet to meet but hope to soon, your commitment to your families and your future are an inspiration to me and I dedicate this dissertation to you.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have influenced and supported me to complete this doctoral dissertation. I would first like to thank my advisor, Dr. James McDonell for his unwavering support, energy, and insight to guide me from my initial concept through the completed dissertation. I would also like to thank my dissertation committee, Drs. Jitka Dvorakova, Susan Limber, and Mark Small. Each committee member offered me different insight and support that coalesced to form a fabulous, enlightening team for me.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

With the recent expansion of refugee migration across the globe, many communities are becoming increasingly diverse. However, along with the benefits of diversity, cultural divides can emerge. Members of the dominant culture may not be familiar with, nor understand, cultural practices of the newly arrived community member, and vice versa. All too often communities are plagued by incorrect assumptions about members that often lead to isolation, marginalization, and other deleterious effects. This especially may be true of immigrant families’ childrearing practices and beliefs. Raising awareness and understanding of cultural childrearing practices is essential to minimizing such effects. This dissertation research seeks to identify various cultural childrearing values, beliefs and practices of New Americans\(^1\) in Vermont. Barriers and supports for retaining some cultural practices while adapting others will be identified.

The increase in refugee families coming to the U.S. is well-documented. According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, the first six months of 2011 saw an increase of 16% in asylum claims in industrialized countries compared with the previous year. Most recently, the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) reported welcoming over 62,000 new arrivals into the U.S. during fiscal year 2012. More than half of the arrivals hailed from Bhutan and Burma, with the remaining top ten arrival groups

\(^1\) New American is a term used to describe a refugee, asylee, or immigrant who has resettled in the US, regardless of US naturalization status. This term is used because it is considered to be more focused on the present and toward the future, than on the past history of the new arrival.

\(^2\) Although this researcher did not ask parents to provide their definition of “beat,” they
emigrating from Cuba, Iraq, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Iran, Eritrea, Sudan and Ethiopia (http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/resource/orr-year-in-review-2012). Moreover, during the past twenty years, Vermont alone has witnessed an increase of 73% in refugees resettling in Vermont (Vermont Agency of Human Services, 2014). This is significant for Vermont as the state has had a predominantly homogenous population with little to no contact with the aforementioned countries prior to the resettlement movement.

Yet despite this increased resettlement of refugees and immigrants in the U.S., and within Vermont in particular, there is evidence that refugee families often do not fully understand host country parenting beliefs and practices (Ahn, Miller, Wang & Laszloffy, 2014; McDonald, Coover, Sandler, Thao & Shalhoub, 2012; Renzaho, Green, Mellor & Swinburn, 2011). Similarly, Americans often are unfamiliar with, and misunderstand, the parenting practices and beliefs of refugee families (Segal & Mayadas, 2005). Acknowledging this dilemma, the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (2001) has created a cultural orientation curriculum, Journey of Hope, to help refugees learn about various aspects of life in the U.S., including parenting. The goal of this, and similar cultural orientation programs, is to help New Americans assimilate into their new environment. In part, the rationale for including parenting in cultural education curricula stems from the fact that the parenting practices of refugee and immigrant families has, in some instances, led to involvement with child protection services (Detlaff & Earner, 2012; Williams, 2012).
What appears glaringly absent from much of the literature is the value of the potential contribution to childrearing that New Americans can offer their communities. In addition to further research being necessary to understand the unique needs of refugee and immigrant families, attention should be paid to understanding the values, beliefs and practices that refugee and immigrant families have brought to their new homelands. The voice of New Americans can help bridge the divide between origin and host cultures and further strengthen communities by describing refugees’ cultural values of parenting and caregiving, including their perspectives on what cultural practices to retain and what to adapt in their newly resettled environments.

Limiting dominant culture racism (Fong, 2007) and child welfare’s paternalistic nature (Dandy, 2009; Dumbrill, 2009; Peterson, 2012) are also important to further strengthen relationships within neighborhoods and increase civic engagement of community members. Refugees and immigrants must be engaged in a process to offer their insights about their cultural practices of childrearing, the strengths and barriers to adapting their practice to the dominant culture’s, and highlighting particular desirable practices that they would like to retain in resettlement. Understanding refugee and immigrant parenting practices is essential for the dominant culture in the host communities so that the community can support its newest members and the new, ever diversifying American landscape. Increased awareness and understanding of New Americans’ parenting practice can also potentially help the host community to support the refugees and immigrants to retain their cultural practices that do not conflict with local standards or laws.
Although essential for service providers and educators, further understanding and exchange of knowledge about cultural parenting practices for all community members enriches the entire community. Sharing the strengths and resources of the various cultures that comprise the newly resettled community has the potential to further broaden community relationships and open more avenues for identifying and exploring areas for enhancing protective parenting strategies.

This dissertation will provide information about New Americans’ childrearing practices in their resettled environment which may offer new insight and information for policy makers, program planners, and practitioners. One of the goals of resettlement is assimilation. New Americans often struggle with the extent to which they assimilate into their new environment. Understanding the challenges and supports to retaining some of their cultural practices of childrearing while adapting others to the dominant culture is critical in the assimilation process. Identifying the desirable strengths of non-dominant cultures in raising children will provide further opportunities to broaden understanding within the community and potentially help bridge the cultural divide.

**Purpose of the Study**

Additional research is needed to explore the childrearing perspectives of New Americans as a means to assist communities in being more responsive to the needs of all residents. Understanding the barriers to New Americans’ childrearing practices in Vermont can help bridge the cultural divide and foster more culturally complementary communities among New Americans and their native-born counterparts. The purpose of this study was to explore what community members representing non-dominant cultures
with more of a collectivist approach to childrearing have to say about how they manage retaining some of their cultural childrearing practices while adapting others. How, and if, community members manage to retain some of their desirable childrearing practices and how they adapt others in order to raise safe, healthy, well-adjusted children was explored. In particular, refugees and immigrants who have kept their children safe through conflict, flight, transition and into resettlement have much to share with the dominant culture about employing protective factors to maximize well-being. To date, very little, if any, literature exists that examines elements of non-dominant cultural childrearing practices that may be modified to contribute to the dominant American practices. Rather, most research is strictly in the area of social adjustment and assimilation, with little, if any, consideration of desirable cultural practices that might be beneficial for New Americans to retain.

Often the refugees and immigrants’ assimilation process can come into conflict with American child welfare policy, their children’s educational experience, and so forth. Facilitated focus groups and individual interviews identified the resettled parents’ perspectives and insights on the process of parenting in the new environment. Understanding the challenges of holding onto parenting beliefs and practices consistent with New Americans’ cultures of origin while adapting to life in an American context may serve to bridge the divide between origin and host cultures. Recommendations for social welfare policy makers, program planners, and practitioners will be offered. Truly valuing New Americans when they are fully contributing members of their new
homeland would not only reduce feelings of isolation but also more importantly, draw on new expertise to create a more responsive environment for the whole community.

**Research Questions**

The research was guided by the following questions. First, what parenting beliefs and practices are characteristic of immigrant and refugee families residing in Vermont? Within the literature, research about various ethnic beliefs and practices of childrearing exist, yet further research is needed to understand how the various dimensions such as cultural norms of New Americans, the migration process, socio-cultural context, and structural conditions influence cultural adaptation in relation to childrearing (Deepak, 2005; Tajima & Hirachi, 2010). For example, in their comparative study of acculturation and its influence on physical discipline in Southeast Asian parenting practices in the U.S., Tajima and Hirachi (2010) described their findings of independent thinking as a very low priority characteristic of childrearing, whereas helping others, working hard, and being liked by others all seem to be important values of both Vietnamese and Cambodian parents. They noted that Southeast Asians are an understudied population in the U.S. Within Vermont, 44% of the refugee population in the state is comprised of Southeast Asians (Vermont State Refugee Office, 2014). Therefore, it is essential to further explore the parenting beliefs and practices of not only our Southeast Asian population, but also the other understudied populations that make up our New Americans in Vermont. It is presumed that New Americans’ insights into values of interdependent childrearing, filiality coupled with respect for elders, and an authoritarian approach to parenting will be offered.
Second, how do refugee and immigrant parents view the challenges of parenting in a new cultural context? The literature shows that the cultural divide, between the dominant culture’s beliefs and values about parenting styles and the refugee families’ perspective, often lead to involvement with child protection services (CPS). Immigrant and refugee families may employ parenting practices, including the use of restrictive parental control and corporal punishment that may bring them into contact with child welfare systems (Davidson et al., 2004; Dumbrill, 2008; Lewig, Arney & Salveron, 2010; Lincroft Resner & Leung, 2006; Williams, 2008; Williams, 2010). Davidson et al. (2004) noted that understanding what constitutes acceptable behavior can vary among cultures and therefore may lead to parenting practices or discipline in one culture, as well as the effects of some traditional health practices, being interpreted as child abuse in another. Further research to examine New Americans’ perspectives regarding the challenges of raising children in the Vermont culture is critical to further understand the cultural divide and possibly begin to raise awareness that can help formulate policy and programming to help minimize the need for child protection services’ involvement. It is anticipated that both informal and formal organizing communities for various ethnic subgroups serve as mediating factors because they help with preserving some cultural and/or religious traditions, social adjustment, resources, and the like.

Third, how have New Americans’ parenting beliefs and practices changed in adaptation to the host culture? Research demonstrates wide variation of the impact of acculturation on parenting beliefs and physical discipline (Tajima & Hirachi, 2010). Renzaho et al.’s study (2011) identified some of the tension between the Western value
of raising independent children within an individualistic orientation and the cultural
customs of raising children to be more responsible to a collective style. Key findings in
their research indicated parenting values of respect for the older generation(s),
mindfulness of family duties, maintaining religious and cultural traditions to be passed on
to the next generation, as well as goals of a high quality education and secure future. In
some instances, research points to closer monitoring of children’s behavior and their
social environment to help maintain cultural practices (Deepak, 2005; Renzaho et al,
2011). On the other hand, Tajima and Hirachi (2010) found that values of retention of
obedience or adaptation to independence varied among families depending on their
culture of origin. What is clear is that the extent to which childrearing beliefs and
practices change with acculturation into the host community is inadequately understood
and requires further investigation (Renzaho et al., 2011). Presumably there are particular
beliefs and practices that parents would like to retain but find incompatible with U.S. and
Vermont culture such that it may cause tension for families.

Fourth, how do retained childrearing beliefs and practices influence adjustment in
resettlement? The literature points to tensions, for example, between patrilineal,
hierarchical kinship care and Anglo-American nuclear families’ more democratic
decision-making processes (Deepak, 2005). The complexities of negotiating the
interconnectedness of competing cultural norms, social structures, and beliefs contribute
to a continuum of possible coping styles that reflect the diverse, and sometimes,
contradictory childrearing practices of refugees and immigrants. Further research to
examine which cultural practices are imperative for New Americans to retain and how
these practices influence social adjustment is important in order to help design policy, programming and practice interventions (Deepak, 2005). It is hypothesized that retained practices may affect a sense of belonging to the community without having to relinquish one’s previous identity in order to acculturate.

Finally, to what extent are New American parents comfortable with changes in their parenting approach in their resettled environment? Current research appears to be scant in this particular area. However, Buki et al.’s (2003) study of Chinese immigrant mothers found a positive correlation with mothers’ perceived acculturation gap with their children and less satisfaction. Additional research to answer this question is essential in order to better understand New Americans’ perspectives and plan future programming to facilitate adjustment with adaptation. Mixed feelings about adaptation are expected as parents may be grieving the loss of some customs while embracing others.

**Definition and Terms**

1) *Acculturation* is “…the process by which individuals adapt to cultural environmental change” (Valencia and Johnson, 2008, p.34).

2) *Collectivist Culture* refers to cultural emphasis on interdependence over one’s own needs and desires, with particular valuing of the attention to the needs of others (Yaman, Mesman, IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg & Linting, 2010).

3) *Cultural Competence* is “…the process by which individuals and systems respond respectfully and effectively to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, religions, and other diversity factors in a manner that recognizes, affirms, and values the worth of individuals, families, and
communities and protects and preserves the dignity of each” (NASW, 2001, p. 11).

4) Cultural Sensitivity is “…being aware that cultural differences and similarities exist, and have an effect on values, learning, and behavior” (Stafford et al, 1997, as sited in Paraeducator Entry-Level Training for Supporting Students with Disabilities, 2000, slide #5).

5) Dominant Culture refers to a system of “…values, language, and ways of behaving [that] are imposed on a subordinate culture or cultures through economic or political power. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behaviour, or by monopolizing the media of communication” (Scott & Marshall, 2009, n.p.).

6) An Immigrant is a foreign-born person who moves into another country to reside permanently (Perruchoud & Repath-Cross, 2011).

7) A refugee is someone who “…owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (UNHCR, 2010, p.14).
Theoretical Perspective

Three particular theoretical perspectives are relevant to this dissertation research. First, an ecological framework will describe the multi-level context of refugee families’ experiences of parenting in a new setting. Second, intersectionality theory will highlight categories of oppression and the intersections with structures of power and privilege to transparently recognize privileged and subverted voices. Third, constructs of cultural competence and sensitivity will describe the approaches to working with New Americans in relation to childrearing education and intervention when cultural practices run afoul of U.S. standards and laws.

New American families’ efforts to adapt to life in Vermont while maintaining childrearing beliefs and practices characteristic of their home culture can be challenging. Their potential conflict with dominant culture practices, values, and regulations suggest possible points for prevention and intervention policies and programs. An ecological framework is crucial to understanding this conflict. Ecological theory posits that human beings’ biological (microsystems), human-constructed (mezzosystem), and socio-political-cultural milieu (macrosystem) interact interdependently, transferring energy among the various systems wherein resources are created and shaped for “adaptation, human development and sustainability of environments” (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993, p.419). As Robbins, Chatterjee, and Canda (2006) pointed out, the interaction between individuals’ inherited characteristics and their environmental conditions result in the adaptive or maladaptive achievements of individuals.
With regard to the refugee parenting experience specifically, Williams (2008; 2010) provided an ecological framework for understanding the experience moving from conflict evacuation through experiences in transition to resettlement. She put the refugee parenting experience into an ecological theoretical context, noting the experiences of the pre-flight context, migration, and UNHCR camp milieus for parents. She further examined refugees’ parenting experiences with regard to family structure, social organization and gender roles. In particular, Williams highlighted “…in addition to other multiple losses, the family experiences a major shift from internal control to external control over life decision-making processes” (2010, p.36). She noted that even post-flight, within both camp settings and resettlement, families continue to experience the consequences of loss of control and autonomy.

Williams (2008) further drew attention to Sidebotham’s (2001) ecological macrosystem to apply to refugee parenting experiences. She noted Sidebotham’s categories of a) the dominant cultural beliefs and values in any given society, b) the nature and role of family, c) the attitudes toward and perceptions of children, d) responsibilities in parenting, and e) violence (p.192). Williams particularly emphasized the refugees’ frequent exposure to extreme levels of human rights abuses and violence both pre-flight and during their time in and around refugee camps. During this time, parents, she explained, had to further develop and maintain their protective behaviors to ensure their children’s safety.

This ecological framework also highlighted the different impact that becoming a refugee had on families and gender roles. Williams (2008) explained that filial piety and
gender roles are significant to understanding the impact of conflict and displacement on the family and community arrangements. Through displacement and relocation, fathers, mothers, and children’s roles have changed. For example, in one African refugee camp the traditional practice of the elders of the clans using “Maslaa” (a form of non-violent mediation to address reported incidents of rape) was perceived as undermined because social service providers became involved and were seen as threatening the leadership and authority of the inner-tribal process. Within Afghani family structure, eldest sons as young as thirteen have become the head of the household after their fathers have died. Therefore, their roles with their siblings have changed as they became responsible for the family’s well-being and disciplinary decision-making (Williams, 2008).

Structural changes within the refugee families along with experiences of profound emotional and physical trauma, and economic and food insecurity, further contribute to the disempowered feelings of refugee parents in their resettled environments. Lewig, Arney, and Salveron’s research (2009) discussed the challenges of parenting in a new culture that now enables children to grow more independent of the family system. Among the issues that the refugees faced were their feelings of being undermined by the new culture, their frustration with what they saw as children’s rights, government financial assistance contributing to the children’s acculturation, and increased independent living at the expense of parental authority. For example, Lewig et al. (2009) commented on parents expressing frustration that Australia (similar to U.S. and Canada) takes a child protection orientation rather than a family systems’ one. Also in this same study, parents voiced their concerns that their children were being taught to question authority,
something quite different from their cultures of origin. Parents participating in the study were also saddened and frustrated by the changing roles and expectations of their children in their new environment and culture.

Bridging Refugee Youth & Children’s Services’ (BRYCS) research with refugee parents living in the U.S. has also noted parents’ concerns about balancing the children’s acculturation to U.S. norms with preservation of family and cultural values, particularly with regard to independence and interdependence of children (BRYCS, 2009). Furthermore, BRYCS also cited additional domestic research that had similar findings. The authors noted that refugee parents across various cultures had similar guiding values of childrearing and goals for their children, although specific childrearing methods varied from culture to culture. BRYCS therefore calls for culturally competent services to support parents as they acculturate and develop their skills in navigating a bicultural family existence that includes building on families’ strengths of cohesion, faith, the value of education, and so forth.

Focusing on the macrosystem from ecological theory and based on feminist and race theories, intersectionality theory provides a guiding paradigm among the multiple ways that race, gender, class, sexuality, and nation intersect to drive behavior, socio-economic policy (Cho et al., 2013), and in general, the depth and breadth of the human experience (Murphy et al., 2009). However, intersectionality theory also lends itself well to moving beyond feminist and race concepts toward the inclusion of a variety of social strata as other layers of significance to the framework. As an analytical tool, intersectionality theory uses a generative focus to address the dynamic and contextual
interchange of power (Hernández, Almeida & Dolan-Del Vecchio, 2005; Sho et al., 2013). Intersectionality theory avoids the homogenization of experiences as it locates the intersections of social constructions of oppression (e.g., class, ethnicity, gender) and the structures of power and privilege that lead to discrimination and marginalization. Furthermore, within this theory, multiple axes of identification co-exist with transparent recognition of privileged and subverted voice.

In addition to understanding the impact of the refugee experience for families, it is also essential to consider the theoretical perspective of service provision. Throughout the literature, concepts such as cultural competence and cultural sensitivity are highlighted in practice frameworks. Professional organizations of service providers have developed standards for culturally competent service provision. For example, the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has highlighted ten standards for culturally competent practice. These competencies include:

- Ethics and Values
- Cross-Cultural Knowledge
- Service Delivery
- Diverse Workforce
- Language Diversity
- Self-Awareness
- Cross-Cultural Skills
- Empowerment and Advocacy
- Professional Education
- Cross-Cultural Leadership

It is therefore essential to consider the framework for providing support services to communities with regard to raising children within an environment wherein families can thrive. Although critical to work with people of all backgrounds, standards of cultural competence fall short of efforts to incorporate differing and desirable values of diverse cultures into mainstream paradigms. In other words, moving from cross-cultural to intercultural standards would help to move practice from what Fong (2007) and Dumbrill
(2009) refer to as dominant racism and paternalistic approaches to child welfare, respectively, to a more post-modern proficiency standard of practice. Valuing such a reflexive approach to practice would enable multiple discourses to coexist and shift community work from a modernist approach to a postmodern practice (McArdle & Mansfield, 2013).

This research aims to expand intercultural knowledge of childrearing practices, with particular attention paid to identifying essential, valued cultural childrearing practice methods of various groups of resettled community members. Effective community building must advance beyond expectations of assimilation into creating an environment that appreciates both the exemplary retained and adapted childrearing practices of all of its members, both native-born and newly resettled.

**Significance of the Study**

To date, many social service providers and professionals involved in community building continue to plan programs stemming from, perhaps, a place of cultural awareness, sensitivity, and competence, but fall short of shifting the paradigm to a post-modern model of proficient practice. It is critical to increase understanding of New Americans’ perspectives and insights about childrearing through migration in order to advance professional practice. Refugees and immigrants must be engaged in a process to identify their cultural practices of childrearing and those aspects that they strive to retain as well as those they are willingly adapting. Knowledge of barriers and assistance to retention and adaptation of practices can help inform policy to bridge cultural divides.
among refugees, immigrants, and native-born community members, while also informing program development.

The chapter that follows explicates the relevant issues through a comprehensive review of the literature. This is followed by a thorough description of the research design, including its rationale, along with the processes and procedures used in this dissertation study. The fourth chapter provides the results of the dissertation study, while the final chapter offers a synthesized analysis of the interpretation of the results of this dissertation study.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

In an effort to better understand New Americans’ experience with childrearing, this chapter reviews the process of immigration from pre-migration to resettlement. Potential mitigating factors will be identified and a conceptual framework of childrearing in the host community will be presented. Because this dissertation study is focused on New Americans’ experiences raising their children in Vermont and the central tensions of adapting and retaining parenting practices, specific information about the unique demographic circumstances of Vermont will also be included. Finally, this chapter will conclude with questions for further investigation.

Reasons for Migration

Three significant motives precipitate migration. Parents emigrate from their homelands for economic reasons, to protect their families from conflict zones, and to flee from political persecution. Each of these causes of migration affect the family system.

While some immigrants may share very similar narratives of emigration with refugees (which can include extensive histories of trauma, isolation, and the like), there are some very distinctive characteristics of both experiences. Unlike economic immigrants, refugees flee their homeland because of threats of persecution while economic immigrants choose to leave their homeland in search of economic opportunity and financial security. Cortes (2004) found that, contrasted with refugees, immigrants have the option of returning to their homeland and the opportunity to stay more closely connected to their social supports in their native country. Additionally, she found that
while refugees have lower annual earnings upon arrival, they quickly surpass their economic immigrant counterparts and have greater human capital investment. Questions prevail, then, about how these distinctive characteristics affect parenting in these different arrival groups.

Economic migration is based on a self-selection process whereby parents choose to emigrate in search of greater economic opportunity and future opportunities for their children (e.g., education and career options). Their optimism and hopefulness for their children’s future guide their objectives, with an emphasis on educational opportunities (Paat, 2013). Because of their choice in migration, the option of returning to their homeland exists. Therefore, it may be presumed that should parents find emerging changes in their family structure to be unacceptable, they can return to their native culture and homeland to maintain or reestablish family norms.

However, for families who have fled conflict zones or political persecution, the option to repatriate is rarely available. These parents have no choice but to navigate acculturation and the subsequent changes to the family system. For example, refugee families from a patriarchal society may likely find that their priorities are at odds with American values. Family gender role expectations and gender role socialization can hinder assimilation while also challenging previous conceptions of family (Paat, 2013). For example, females’ life trajectories historically may have been, and continue to be, dictated by expectations of motherhood and homemaking. However, in acculturation within resettlement, doors may now be opened for educational attainment and career
pursuits. Families must now navigate changing gender roles, without the option of returning to their homeland for reinforcement of their native cultural expectations.

Without the option of returning to one’s homeland, and the frequently experienced economic and social hardships that significantly impact the New American family system (Cortes, 2004) can lead to mental health challenges. Further, distress resulting from experiences of torture and trauma can also impact the childrearing experience for displaced persons. Parents can suffer daily from a host of stressors including having survived torture and trauma, unstable housing, poor nutrition, separation from family members, unemployment or underemployment, isolation, loss of social status, and feelings of helplessness and loss of control throughout the migration process. These stressors, combined with limited, if any, resources to address them often lead to difficulties with social adjustment and increase risks for mental health challenges (Adjukovic & Adjukovic, 1993). Moreover, these stressors can contribute to parents being unemotionally available to their children (Loar, 2004). Consequently, parent’s emotional availability to the child pre-flight can be disrupted and presumably unsettle the family structure as well.

In addition to reflecting on reasons for migration and how that can affect family structure, the migration process itself must be examined.

**Pre-emigration**

Many cultural childrearing values and practices from various homelands are identified in the literature, but specific practices identified to ensure child safety and development pre-migration are absent. Instead, much of the research describes the role of
extended kin and community support in childrearing prior to emigration (Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Ochoka & Janzen, 2008; Renzaho et al., 2011). Many community members shared interdependent, communal responsibility for the safety, guidance, and well-being of children. However, once emigrated, those same social supports are unavailable. Respect, filiality, and passing down traditions from one generation to the next are widely held beliefs and practices among many non-Western pre-migration families (Al-Simadi & Atoum, 2008; de Haan, 2011; Renzaho, 2011; Williams, 2008). Also during pre-flight, refugees had to protect their children from aversive factors that led to emigration, including war, religious persecution, and discrimination (William, 2008).

**Transition**

In addition to illustrating some pre-flight distress for refugee parents, Moorehead (2005) vividly described refugee and asylum-seeking parents’ experience during transition and resettlement in raising their children in detention centers and resettled communities world-wide. Her interviews with parents identified the pre-flight trauma that resurfaced in the detention centers, and at times was experienced even worse than before emigration. She also reported the isolation and despair that both adults and children experienced while living in limbo awaiting the outcomes of their refugee and asylum applications. Limited resources and an unknown future, along with language barriers and minimal, if any, social supports increased the stress level of both parents and children, which further negatively impacted childrearing. Lastly, even in resettlement, parents have continued to describe their despair in relation to the unfulfilled anticipation of life in
resettlement. Parents were surprised by opportunities that had not come to fruition, the loss of their culture of origin, and their confusion about expectations of the dominant culture. Future research to examine how the challenges of the stress and despair specifically impact childrearing practice is necessary.

**Resettlement in the Host Community**

Particular consideration to childrearing in resettlement needs to be examined through the lens of the acculturation process in the new environment. Despite some variation in terms of the definition of acculturation, for example, the process by which one ultimately assimilates into the dominant culture or “… a process of interactivity between cultures” (Thomson & Hoffman-Goetz, 2009, p. 983), assimilating to the host environment’s culture rather than recreating the culture of origin-only in the newly resettled state is the goal of acculturation. Research also indicates that through migration, parents struggle with the tension of raising children, at the very least, bi-culturally (Bascallao & Smokowski, 2009; Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995; Ochoka & Janzen, 2008). In adjusting to the new environment, parents enroll their children in school and have high hopes for their children’s integration into the new environment. However, often that integration comes with added challenges of changing roles for both children and parents (Deng & Marlowe, 2013; Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995; Simms & Omaji, 1999). Children quickly learn the host country’s language and often struggle to retain their mother tongue along with traditions of their culture of origin. These challenges contribute to the tensions that newly resettled parents experience in their host countries.
Deepak (2005) distinguished acculturation from the process of migration. She clarified that acculturation focuses on cultural, linguistic and social adjustment irrespective of the historical and structural circumstances that may have precipitated migration. Additionally, with acculturation, traditional practices are discarded and the immigrant becomes ‘American’ (p. 589). For example, the acculturated immigrant speaks English only, dresses in American clothing or style, and assumes American customs and practices. For the purposes of this study, the primary focus concerned acculturation as it specifically related to childrearing practices.

Moving beyond the acculturation model, Deepak suggested a conceptual model of the process of migration, with what she coined as a transnational perspective, to replace the acculturation model. Deepak acknowledged the dynamic and complex interconnectivity of “… a set of shifting and conflicting demands, expectations, and possibilities centered on gender, power, culture, and sexuality coming from the ideologies, structural conditions, and cultural and social norms of the home and host countries” (p.590). Deepak further explained that immigrants’ experiences also are influenced by socio-demographic factors (e.g., economic, race, and class), leading parenting experiences to be either satisfying or riddled with conflict.

Certainly Williams’ (2008) application of Sidebotham’s (2001) ecological macrosystem model also accentuates the historical and structural conditions that contribute to the parenting experience through flight, transition, and resettlement. Extending beyond acknowledgement that children are located in the context of their families, community, and culture, and that the child and family are also shaped and
influenced by the transactions between and among individuals, families, groups, and their environments, Williams also focused on the macrosystem influence of the effects of violence and war on childrearing. Deng and Marlowe (2013) concur with Williams’ (2008) model while also emphasizing identity indicators such as gender and cultural background contributing to, and influencing, childrearing practice. The authors particularly noted the feelings of isolation and limited parenting support and services provision awareness among the experiences of South Sudanese refugees living in New Zealand.

Consistent with other studies (Dachyshyn, 2006; Renzaho et al., 2011), Deng and Marlowe’s (2013) research described extensive extended family and community support for childrearing prior to migration. They discussed research participants’ concerns about their children’s acculturation at the expense of losing their culture of origin identity. Finally, the authors discussed the language and cultural barriers to service provision leading to misunderstandings about acceptable and unacceptable parenting practice in the host community. Deng and Marlowe, therefore, advocate for partnerships and resources that facilitate proactive engagement with refugees to ensure effective childrearing practice while synthesizing the past and present experiences of refugees that have resulted from the settlement process.

The extent to which parents are able to preserve the integrity of their culture of origin and its specific effects on their current parenting practice has also been examined in the literature. Several researchers cite transnational childrearing as a method for preserving cultural identity and practice (Battistella & Conaco, 1998; Best, 2014;
Transnational childrearing involves sending the child(ren) to live with relatives or other community-based fostering figures in the parents’ homeland in order to raise the child(ren) for an extended period of time in a familiar culture of origin or homeland. However, for many resettled families, transnational childrearing is not a viable option.

For families without transnational childrearing options, research has focused primarily on the tensions and discord within the parent-child relationships as well as the travails of navigating discipline practice (Cheah, Leung & Zhou, 2013; de Haan, 2012; Yagmurlu & Sanson, 2009). Parents must navigate their ‘multiple sociocultural worlds’ (de Haan, 2012, p. 397) as they determine which values and practices they will retain and which ones they will adapt. Furthermore, they must also consider how they will transform their parenting experience to meet their children’s developmental needs in the new environment.

As resettled parents search for an effective balance of new and traditional childrearing values and practices, particular constructs of parenting are useful in understanding New Americans’ perspectives on retention and adaptation of their cultural childrearing customs. Constructs of ethnicity and culture, and neighborhood context, with sub-constructs of parenting styles, gender, retention and adaptation of cultural practices in childrearing, collectivist/individualist cultures, filial piety, neighboring, and religiosity all converge and are grounded in intersectionality theory to provide a framework for identifying and enhancing intercultural understandings of childrearing (see Figure 1).
Intersectionality theory applies to understanding childrearing by providing the contextual foundation that allows for the researcher to consider how New Americans occupy social positions “within [dynamic] interlocking structures of oppression” (Murphy et al., 2009, p. 10). In particular with relation to childrearing in the host community, ethnicity and culture, and neighborhood context place parenting in the nexus of intersectionality theory.

The complexity of New Americans’ social status, in light of intersectionality theory, is complicated by multiple categories of oppression and privilege. For example, race or ethnicity of New Americans in a predominantly homogenous Caucasian state may intersect with social class and patriarchy. More specifically, consider New Americans from a non-European and patriarchal culture of origin. They may grapple with being constantly recognized as appearing different than their European-decent counterparts in the host community while they are also likely to be dealing with a change in social class (e.g., living in poverty and with less social status as a minority upon arrival).

Moreover, New Americans then also must contend with the intersection of their culture’s values of patriarchy with the host community’s more gender-equal values. For example, it may be necessary for a wife to work outside the home to help contribute to the family’s income. To further illustrate the complexity of the New American’s experience, a patriarchal culture further may be complicated by gender expectations and shifting gender roles in resettlement, including with regard to decision-making and childrearing. Therefore, grounding this dissertation research in intersectionality theory
provides a wonderful vantage point for offering an innovative and comprehensive perspective on New American childrearing practices.

Constructs of ethnicity and culture, and neighborhood context are interconnected. For the purposes of this dissertation research, the question then arises as to how these constructs intersect to influence and impact parenting in resettlement. Each construct, and related sub-constructs, will be discussed below.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework: Intersectionality Theory

**Ethnicity and Culture**

(Parenting styles, Gender, Retention and Adaptation of Cultural Practices in Childrearing, Collectivist/Individualist Cultures, Filial Piety, Religiosity)

**Neighborhood Context**

**CHILDREARING PRACTICES**

**Ethnicity and Culture**

For the purposes of this dissertation study, ethnicity was defined as a complex (Ferrari, 2002), socially constructed grouping of traits. Incorporated in these traits are cultural heritage, language, food, religion, and other characteristics that associate a group
of people with one another for purposes of identity while distinguishing them from others (Markus, 2008). Current U.S. census data indicates that over 95% of Vermont’s population is white alone (U.S. Census Bureau, 2013). In the most ethnically diverse county within Vermont, the white alone population comprises slightly over 92% of the total population. Therefore, New Americans whose skin tone or traditional dress differs from the majority population often stand out when they are out in the community. Furthermore, the dearth of exposure that the larger population has to ethnic and racial diversity can exacerbate fears of the unknown and increase stereotypical assumptions because of little opportunity to have those assumptions challenged.

Questions arise concerning the extent to which differences in appearance and behavior influence New Americans’ parenting practice. Moreover, many people from minority ethnicities living in Vermont also share a patriarchal system (e.g., Nepali and Somali-Bantu). Therefore, questions about how a patriarchal orientation and gender role expectations shape childrearing in a host community whose social structure is more gender-egalitarian emerge. These questions point to the sub-constructs of ethnicity and culture. Similar to ethnicity, culture, too, must be defined before addressing these questions.

**Culture.** For the purposes of this research study, culture is defined as a ‘dynamically changing environment’ that shapes human development through maintaining and conveying shared patterns of socially-inherited values, beliefs, and customs through language, food, and lore (Cole & Parker, 2011). The essence of this study is to explore cultural commonalities among New Americans as they parent their
Understanding parenting approaches and examining the variety of parenting styles that can be exhibited through various cultures is important for setting the foundation for investigating commonalities and differences.

**Parenting style.** For nearly the last five decades, human development theorists have engaged in extensive research to identify and understand parenting styles and their effects on child development. Baumrind (1966) pioneered this research when she first identified three models of parenting control: permissive, authoritarian and authoritative. In essence, she explained that the permissive style of parenting offers the parent as a resource to the child by providing consultation and rationale for decision-making, as well as affirmation and acceptance of the value of individual assertiveness. The approach engages minimal, if any, punitive elements and is focused on creating opportunities for children to explore and develop their own self-regulation skills.

Baumrind (1966) asserted that in contrast to the permissive style, the authoritarian approach to parental control is based more on an absolute standard that has its roots in religious motivation. Using this approach, the parents value obedience and strive to shape children’s behavior in order to minimize self-will and maximize a hierarchical structure and its preservation in accordance with the pursuit of Divine Will. Baumrind noted that this is antithetical to 20th century American culture with its minimal focus on training children to pursue Divine Will over self-interest.

Finally, in Baumrind’s (1966) original taxonomy (she later added the neglecting-rejecting style), she described the authoritative style as the third and favored approach to parenting. In this approach, the parents direct children’s activities and provide a rationale
for their policies, while also encouraging dialogue when the child refuses to conform. With this method, Baumrind contended that autonomous self-will and ‘disciplined conformity’ are valued by the parents (p. 891).

Baumrind’s (1966) typology has established the common frame of reference for researchers to understand and categorize parenting approaches. However, as research moved toward the 21st century, further global migration provided additional significant fodder for researchers to go beyond the typology while studying cross-cultural impacts and effects on immigrant families in their new environments. Baumrind’s typology has been critiqued as primarily a Western model (Chao, 1994). Researchers have attributed the use of authoritarian style of parenting to a strict code of behavior and a means to control and subjugate children’s behavior, rather than as a style that has emerged from parents’ “care and concern for children’s well-being and successful adjustment,” which is more consistent with collectivist culture (Maiter & George, 2003, p. 414).

Despite some controversy with Baumrind’s typology’s applicability across cultures, questions have been raised about how collectivist culture influences the parenting experience and social values differently than individualist cultures (for examples, see Pomerantz & Wang, 2009; Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Sorkhabi, 2005). In particular, it is essential that research examines the constructs of authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting in order to further understand refugee and immigrants’ transition into resettlement. For the purposes of this dissertation research it was also vital to identify elements of various parenting styles that may be adapted to contribute to the development of additional protective factors for childrearing.
Several researchers have examined the concept of parental control (Green, Mellor & Swinburn, 2006; Lau, Takeuchi & Alegria, 2006; Pomerantz & Wang, 2009; Renzaho, Rudy & Grusec, 2001; Sorkhabi, 2005; Tajima & Harachi, 2010). In their comparative study of its role in child development in the U.S. and China, Pomerantz and Wang (2009) found that an authoritarian approach had a direct negative effect on children’s psychological development across both cultures. They stressed that the East Asian culture of Confucian teaching, with its emphasis on learning as a life-long “moral endeavor” for self-improvement is a key factor of East Asian children accepting parental control in relation to education (p. 287). They also noted that East Asian children may be internalizing their parents’ goals for them because of the connectedness that they feel toward their parents. European American children, on the other hand, tend to perform poorer on academic tasks if they feel that their parents have made the decisions for them.

Extending the concept of connectedness and its role in parent-child relationships, Tajima and Harachi (2010) noted that parenting goals, even in resettlement, have included both character development and identity formation. Values of work ethic, respect for elders, humility, and belonging to one’s culture of origin all comprise identity formation. Tajima and Hirachi’s study concurred with previous research to indicate that core values of obedience, hard work, and helping others were consistent across Asian cultures and confirmed the notion of ‘communitarian’ beliefs (p. 227). Many of these goals have been met through an authoritarian parenting approach (Ang & Go, 2006; Chao, 1994).
Individualist and collectivist culture. Authoritarian parenting can be associated with collectivist culture (Fisher, 2013). In a study of understanding the transmission of values in individualist and collectivist cultures, Rudy and Grusec (2001) explained that authoritarian parenting is associated with values of obedience and respect for authority, absolute standards of behaviors and expectations, and discouraging give-and-take, which all contribute to the minimization of the child’s sense of autonomy. Parenting in an authoritarian collectivist culture could include not only parents but also community members taking responsibility for disciplining children. When a child misbehaves, for example, the adult witnessing the misbehavior may not ask for, nor consider, the child’s explanation for his behavior, but rather immediately discipline the child in an effort to instill obedience without question. This demonstrates adult authority and control over the situation to promote the norms of the community over the goals of the individual.

Authoritative parenting, on the other hand, has been identified as having firm control while also providing the child with an opportunity to reason and negotiate. Thus the individual goals of the child are taken into consideration. Using the example of a child, an authoritative parent would offer an opportunity for the child to explain his or her behavior and negotiate a consequence. However, as Rudy and Grusec further noted, authoritarian parenting is less effective than an authoritative approach in transmitting values in Western European societies because these cultures are more individualist in nature. Within this culture the focus is on the pursuit of individual goals and wishes, as opposed to a collectivist orientation. Generally, a collectivist orientation views self-
interest and self-assertion negatively while placing significant value on interdependence, compliance without questioning, and cooperation.

In traditional African society, the community is central to the child’s life and well-being (Mushunje, 2006; Naicker, 2011; Whitworth & Wilkinson, 2013). The concept of ‘Ubuntu’ has enormous significance for the protection of children and their opportunities to thrive. Unlike Western standards which view child-wellbeing and protection as primarily the parents’ responsibility, Ubuntu implies a shared communal responsibility with the moral obligation to look after one another (Mushunje, 2006). Also of considerable importance is the sense of rights and responsibilities of adults and children alike to promote the well-being of both individuals and society, conveying a sense of “belonging to and identifying with the community” (Mushunje, 2006, p.16). Discipline, oversight, and protection is seen as the domain of the entire community, and not just the parents. While modernization has impacted and somewhat transformed this premise, some elements of the traditional values of collectivism are still prevalent today.

Considering that two of Vermont’s largest recent arrival populations are Bhutanese Nepali and Somali (Vermont State Refugee Office, 2014), questions arise as to what shared childrearing values and practices are common to their collectivist and interdependent cultures. Investigating parenting styles particularly within Vermont’s Southeast Asian and African residents is essential. It is hypothesized that these New Americans, coming from more collectivist cultures than their American-born counterparts will value interdependent childrearing and an authoritarian style of parenting.
Filial piety. Filial piety is another sub-construct of culture that greatly affects the parenting experience. Demonstrating devotion and deference to one’s parents and elders is the hallmark of filial piety and the guiding moral principle of human behavior (Chen, 2006). Filial piety in Confucian tradition has been perceived to serve as a protective factor from many social problems. Researchers often describe filiality not only as moral grounding for disciplinary behavior but also as a foundation of solidarity within the family (Chen, 2006; Lewis, 2008; Schwartz, Hurley, Park, Umana-Taylor, Brown, Weisskirch, Samboango, Yeong Kim, Castillo & Greene, 2010; Yee Lee & Mjelde-Mossey, 2204). However, with globalization this perception has begun to shift. With liberalization, migration, and acculturation, Chen’s (2006) research has indicated participants’ questioning whether they are instilling the same level of filial piety with their children in the U.S. that they experienced in their own childhoods back home. Nonetheless, filial piety is significant in Asian cultures even while not manifest in the same way in the U.S.

Moreover, filiality is prevalent in far more cultures than merely those of Asia. However, there are differences in how family responsibility is conceived in the literature (Bulcroft, Carmody & Bulcroft, 1996; Deutsch, 2004; Lam, 2004; Schwartz et al., 2010). Schwartz et al. (2010) drew distinctions among three related constructs of: communalism, familism, and filial piety. The authors defined these constructs by defining communalism as a critical point of reference that places social relationships (both close relatives and extended “kin”) above individual achievement. This is characteristic of the African Diaspora community which includes African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and African
immigrants. Schwartz et al. (2010) described familism within the Hispanic American community as prioritizing the family’s needs above individual needs. Lastly, Schwartz et al. (2010) noted filial piety within the Asian American community as providing honor to the family, caring for elderly parents, and fulfilling parents’ wishes and dreams, including after parents have died. Regardless of these distinctions, each of these constructs, despite their differing underlying motivations, is indicative of putting family needs above the individual member’s needs. Taking responsibility for the family unit rather than just for the individual member reveals a more collectivist than individualistic perspective on the role of family member.

Furthermore, researchers (Almeida, Molnar, Kawachi & Subramanian, 2009; Ferrari, 2002; Sasaki & Kim, 2011; Schwartz et al, 2010) pointed to the protective factors that filiality and its related constructs provide. They noted that unlike individualistic cultures that focus on personal agency (e.g., European American), collectivist cultures consider social affiliation to be a critical factor contributing to motivation. Additionally, researchers noted that these types of collectivist orientations have also contributed to the promotion of self-esteem and served to prevent anxiety and depression (Ferrari, 2002; Schwartz et al., 2010). Ferrari (2002) found that familism served as a protective factor for child maltreatment. She explained that perhaps this is because of the shared responsibility for both disciplining and nurturing children among the extended family network. Schwartz et al. (2010) attributed these benefits of filiality to the social support system created, the stronger sense of duty to family and other social connections, and the
encouragement of accountability and consideration of the effects of one’s actions on others.

**Cultural adaptation and retention.** Research in the area of acculturation strategies is abundant (Benson et al., 2011; Berry, 1997; Bhattacharya, 2011; Birman & Tran, 2008; Fisher, 2013; Goodkind, 2006; Lazarevic, Wiley, & Pleck, 2012; Navas, Rojas, Garcia & Pumares, 2007; Phillamore, 2011; Smith, 2008; Taylor, 2010). For the purposes of this dissertation study, acculturation was defined as

…the process through which an individual's cultural models become increasingly divergent from the shared cultural models of their previous social group, and become increasingly similar to the cultural models held by members of the social group to which they have immigrated, through direct contact with members of this social group (Broesch, & Hadley, 2012, p. 376).

This definition of acculturation holds potential for interculturation, an appreciation of the reciprocal interchange of norms, values, and beliefs among diverse cultures (Berry, 1997).

According to Berry (1997), cross-cultural psychology explores the multifaceted patterns of permanence and change from homeland to resettlement. He proposed a framework that incorporates psychological, sociocultural, and economic domains as related to adaptation. Berry discussed his framework for understanding acculturation as a result of the two concepts, cultural maintenance, or the value of maintaining one’s identity and characteristics, and contact and participation, or the value of maintaining relationships with the larger society (Berry, 1997).
Berry argued that depending on what one values in terms of cultural maintenance or contact and participation (both the dominant culture group members as well as the non-dominant/newly resettled members), strategies will either fall under one of four categories: integration, assimilation, separation or marginalization. Integration includes mutual adaptation by both the host culture and the new arrival’s culture, while in assimilation only one culture adapts. The concept of separation involves either one culture choosing or enforcing to separate/isolate (i.e., housing location). Lastly, marginalization then results from exclusion or discrimination. Phillimore (2011) described Berry’s framework of acculturation strategies, as shown in Table I.

Berry’s model of acculturation strategies noted the importance of maintaining cultural identity and characteristics, contact, and participation. For example, clearly maintenance is linked to the idea that immigrant parents wish to sustain an identity with their native culture, including retaining parenting practices which may demonstrate filial piety through honoring one’s parents. Similarly, contact and participation suggest the process of acculturation, including the adaptation of one’s parenting strategies in order to conform to the norms, values, and practices of one’s adopted community. Tensions with retention and adaptation of parenting strategies can impact the acculturation experience of New American parents and family systems.

Phillimore added that a psychosocial approach to further understand acculturation will extend Berry’s framework to include the psychological dimensions of resettlement. For example, consideration must be given to the psychological distress and mental health problems that result from the refugee experience and the inability to access adequate
services. One could also argue that incorporating an ecological approach to provide more in-depth consideration of the political and economic context would offer a more complete picture of the acculturation process. For instance, directed attention to federal and state policies with regard to acceptance of refugees and location assignment, local housing occupancy and unemployment rates and their implications for opportunities, allocation of resources for service provision and what that indicates in terms of community values, are all important aspects to consider when understanding the acculturation process.

The need to examine concepts of cultural integration and biculturalism builds on both Berry’s (1997) and Phillimore’s (2011) research, although in a somewhat different manner than the concept of interculturation (and perhaps more discerning and relevant to childrearing in particular). Research has begun to explore the balance of adaptation to mainstream culture with one’s culture of origin (biculturalism) and its association with

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<td>Integration – Preferred, UK policy, mutual adaptation</td>
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better child functioning and protective factors in families (Calzada, Brottman, Huang, Bat-Chava & Kingston, 2009). Calzada and her colleagues (2009) specifically called for the need for further research to examine the mechanisms by which parenting practices of non-dominant cultures can serve as a mediating variable to child functioning.

In addition to examining biculturalism, understanding the importance of social capital in relation to acculturation and the resettlement process is also critical. Researchers noted that for resettled immigrants, within-group social networking is essential for minimizing stress (Bhattacharya, 2011; Navas et al., 2007; Smith, 2008). Within-group social networking provides social capital in the forms of familiarity, social support, housing, and social networking for economic opportunities (Cheung & Phillimore, 2014). Yet the shared values and customs which serve as social capital within-group, also serve to separate the group from the dominant culture in the acculturation process (Navas et al., 2007). However, Navas et al. (2007) also found that although this ideological domain serves to separate the immigrant communities from dominant culture, the communities still share the values of what the researchers term the ‘peripheral’ domains (such as work and economic) with dominant culture. It appears that there is both within-group social capital and social capital that can be essential to the dominant culture, particularly to the labor force in terms of finding initial employment (Lamba, 2003). This variation in acculturation response (e.g., both separation and shared domains) can also illuminate some of the ethnic tensions that exist in diverse communities.
Gender and gender roles. Gender, too, must be considered as a sub-construct of culture that impacts parenting. As the World Health Organization (2015) defined it, “’Gender’ refers to the socially constructed roles, behaviours, activities, and attributes that a given society considers appropriate for men and women” (n.p.).

Given this definition, gender and gender roles are socially constructed within cultures, as culture is responsible for prescribing such roles. Further, co-parenting relationships are shaped by dominant culture–influenced beliefs and values about childrearing (Bornstein, Putnick, & Lansford, 2011). Expectations of appropriate behavior and parenting attributions for mothers and fathers may vary considerably from one group of people to another. Bornstein et al.’s (2011) cross cultural study of parenting among nine countries confirmed that, “Country and parent gender differences suggest that likely powerful cultural processes help shape childrearing attitudes” (2011, p. 233).

For New Americans then, tensions and conflict may arise as they navigate gender expectations from their homelands with expectations from their host country. Family decision-making processes may be challenged by historical gender roles in a new environment that may espouse a different approach. For example, in a patriarchal society gender status may perpetuate a woman’s role as strictly to care for the children and household. She may be subverted and denied family decision-making responsibility. Yet in the newly resettled environment, parents may be exposed to more egalitarian decision-making processes that are part of the dominant culture’s expectations. Further, mothers may now be encouraged to engage in educational and employment opportunities that perhaps have been denied to them prior to resettlement. As a result, questions emerge
about how gender expectations of childrearing and co-parenting practices have changed in the resettled environment.

Several researchers have looked to answer the question of gender expectations in resettlement (Barrenechea, 1995; Fisher, 2013; Kurrien & Vo, 2004; Renzaho et al., 2011). Renzaho et al.’s (2011) research indicated that African migrants in Australia maintained a traditional, hierarchical family structure wherein the father remained the head of the household and responsible for the major family decisions while other gender-specific roles were also delineated. However, this research also indicated that post-resettlement evidence is emerging that suggests that there is evolving gender tolerance with regard to parent-child communication and decision-making as families acculturate to their Western environment (2011).

Similarly to Renzaho et al.’s (2011) findings, Fisher’s (2013) research on domestic violence with African refugees resettled in Australia found that many of the men in her study were either unemployed or underemployed compared with their status in their homelands. Post-settlement, they experienced a perceived loss of their role as “breadwinner” and the associated position as “head of household” in a traditional, more hierarchical family structure. Therefore, their sense of identity and integrity was lost in resettlement, consequently leaving them feeling disempowered (2013; see also Barrenechea, 1995).

Additionally, Fisher (2013) noted that policies that provided financial support directly to mothers (e.g., public assistance) also contributed to fathers’ feelings of being undermined and appropriating their ‘provider’ role, which they perceived to diminish
their traditional family structure. Simultaneously, women often took on the available unskilled labor jobs which afforded them some financial power, perhaps even experiencing this for the first time in their lives. This may serve to empower women to ask for support in managing the household and other areas traditionally solely performed in her domain (Barrenechea, 1995).

Despite originating from a culture similar to African culture of patriarchy, once resettled in America, Asian fathers have acknowledged the need for husband and wife to share more egalitarian roles in childrearing (Kurrien & Vo, 2004). Yet South and Southeast Asian cultures’ childrearing practice generally involves far more than co-parenting. Extended family, particularly grandmothers and other female family members, often share in the caregiving of the child, including the responsibility for discipline and moral instruction (Kurrien & Vo, 2004). Hence, historically gendered parenting roles (or some modification thereof) may continue to be perpetuated in resettlement.

Parenting roles defined by gender also exist for Eastern European families. Generally, mothers are mostly responsible for childrearing in terms of day-to-day activities, caregiving, and education. However, Nesteruk and Marks (2011) found that Eastern Europeans have been able to integrate (according to Berry’s framework described above) their childrearing practices with dominant U.S. culture. Although Nesteruk and Marks’ research focused on immigrants (both some with refugee status and others who emigrated for access to higher education opportunities and white collar employment positions), they attribute successful integration to the Eastern European immigrants’ high
educational attainment status (both domestically and abroad) and rapid professional incorporation into mainstream culture.

Religiosity. Along with gender role as a sub-construct of ethnicity and culture, religiosity must be considered as an element of ethnicity and culture in resettlement. For many New Americans, religious identification has played a significant role in their lives prior to migration. For some refugees, persecution solely because of their identified religion (regardless of religiosity) led to their migration (e.g., Bosnian Muslims). For others, religion was infused into a way of life (e.g., Bhutanese Nepali Hindus).

While religion and culture can go hand-in-hand, religiosity focuses on “an overarching system of beliefs and practices concerning the supernatural” (Sasaki & Kim, 2011, p. 402). Sasaki and Kim’s (2011) research examined religion as a coping strategy, distinguishing between collectivist and individualist cultures. They found that members of collectivist cultures rely on their faith community primarily as reinforcement of their values of social affiliation. Cultures focused more on individualism and personal agency, however, use their faith community for the sense of control they gain to withstand personal hardship. Questions emerge as to the importance of religiosity in parenting in resettlement.

As with ethnicity and culture (and their sub-constructs described above) influencing the parenting experience in the host community, so does the neighborhood context within which New Americans resettle. Several components should be considered in an attempt to understand how neighborhood context intersects with ethnicity and culture to impact the childrearing experience of New Americans.
Neighborhood Context

Neighborhood context also plays an important role in influencing parenting practices and understanding how neighborhood intersects with ethnicity and culture is critical to understanding parenting among New Americans. Particularly with regard to housing choice, refugees (compared with all immigrants) face the most challenges (Carter & Osborne, 2009). Considering that refugees arrive with minimal, if any, financial resources, limited or no English language proficiency, and with a skill set or employment qualifications which are unlikely to be transferable without additional training, employment prospects are limited. Moreover, depending on where they are from, many refugees are unlikely to have held a driver’s license let alone the opportunity to learn to drive prior to arrival. Therefore it is essential for New Americans to secure housing on public transportation routes so they can access employment, groceries, schools, and medical facilities. Vermont is primarily a rural state restricting housing options solely to urban areas. However, within Chittenden County (Vermont’s most urban county with a population of approximately 160,000 and a public transportation system that does not extend to each of the county’s towns), the rental vacancy rate is at 1.7% (L. Black-Plumeau, personal communication, January 22, 2015). Like so many residents in Vermont and Chittenden County, in particular, refugees also are challenged by the lack of affordable housing and limited housing options. Many have resettled in small enclaves within impoverished areas within the county’s cities. Additionally, a lack of affordable housing coupled with refugees’ low incomes leave refugees spending more than 30% of
their income on housing, which has been considered a housing affordability problem (Carter & Osborn, 2009; Schwartz & Wilson, 2006).

In addition to understanding the local dearth of available and affordable housing, it is also critical to understand concepts of neighboring in order to capture the neighborhood context. In the late 1970’s and early 1980’s, research in the field of neighboring emerged (for examples, see Greider & Krannich, 1984; Mayo, 1979; McGahan, 1971; Unger & Wandersman, 1982). Research has defined neighboring as local relationships characterized by trust, friendship, and support (Sunblad & Sapp, 2011). Furthermore, researchers also stressed that social interactions within this construct are defined by the lending and borrowing of tools, asking for assistance in times of emergency and informal visiting (Perkins et al., 1990, as cited in Sunblad and Sapp, 2011; Unger and Wandersman, 1985). Questions arise about how neighboring influences the neighborhood, feelings of belonging, and how and where neighboring intersects with ethnicity and culture to influence the parenting experience in the host community.

Recently, a re-emerging field of research has focused attention on the impact of neighboring on the social fabric of community (Beaudoin, 2009; Nyawasha, Nekhwevha & Chipunza, 2012; Rengifo, 2008; Tendulkar, Koenen, Dunn, Buka & Subramanian, 2012). Neighbors are not as likely to assist one another as they once did in the more recent past due to less neighbor-to-neighbor social engagement and a declining trust in community institutions (Rengifo, 2008). However, the concepts of neighboring and neighborliness are nonetheless resurfacing and highlighted as both protective factors for
children and a supportive resource for parents in their childrearing efforts (Jack & Jordan, 1999; McDonell, in press; Melton, 2009).

While the concepts of neighboring and neighborliness may be resurfacing, neighborhood satisfaction is also a critical element of understanding neighborhood context. Feelings of safety, engagement in neighborhood activities, and access to public transportation are some examples of neighborhood satisfaction variables. Ceballo and Hurd (2008) found that neighborhood satisfaction related to mothers’ feelings of confidence with parenting their children. Specifically, a stressful neighborhood environment correlated with mothers’ confidence levels. Surprisingly though, the authors also found an inverse correlation between neighborhood satisfaction and mother’s greater use of psychological control. One possible explanation for this finding was that with a less stressful environment, mothers could expend more energy on parenting (though not necessarily in supportive ways). Just as Burton and Jarrett (2000) contended over a decade ago with regard to families in urban neighborhoods and child development outcomes, questions remain as to what is the neighborhood milieu for New Americans in Vermont and how it influences their childrearing experience.

**Contextualization of American Family Culture**

Characterizing American childrearing can be quite challenging. As a country primarily comprised of immigrants from around the world, the only truly indigenous parenting values, beliefs and practices are held by a small, and also diverse, minority; the First Nations People. Nevertheless, Weisner (2009) described American parenting’s inconsistent cultural standards and scripts that often produce conflictual intrapersonal and
cultural tensions. He highlighted an example of middle class American parents valuing independence and personal agency in children while simultaneously encouraging them to seek assistance and attention from adults. Moreover, Weisner further accentuated that there are variations in scripts among the different socio-economic classes and minority communities, such that self-reliance, for example, may not be held in the same regard for a parent from a non-middle class background.

Family structure is another cultural aspect of American childrearing that must be considered. The marriage rate is declining. In Vermont, the marriage rate is currently 8.3 per 1,000 residents, slightly higher than the national rate (Center for Disease Control, 2012). However, the divorce rate is 3.6 per 1,000 residents, implying that nearly half of marriages end in divorce. It then may be presumed that many children are dividing their time between two different households. This back and forth between households may potentially lead to confusing messages for children in terms of rules and parenting approaches. Additionally, divorce can further complicate the parents’ opportunities to solicit immediate support with parenting-in-the moment.

Along with family structure, it is also important to consider family decision-making processes in order to grasp the complexity of American culture. Family decision-making processes can run the gamut from authoritarian to permissive, and even neglectful, given the wide diversity in American culture. However, as Deepak (2005) noted, dominant Anglo-American culture tends to value democratic decision-making practices. This would suggest that children’s voices are part of the process. However, many other variables also may contribute to the extent to which children participate in
decision-making processes (e.g., the impact of socio-economic or neighborhood stressors on choices that may enter the decision-making discourse).

Anecdotally, there is an assumption that respect for authority has eroded over the last forty years in Vermont. For example, adults have commented that children rarely address adults by their surname as they had done in their youth. Adults have also commented that they have seen or experienced children challenging adult decisions. Further indicative of a shift from docile acceptance of dominant practice, it is not uncommon to see a car bumper sticker stating, “Question Authority” in Vermont.

While promoting self-reliance, changing family structure from two parent households to increasingly dual households, and more collaborative family decision-making processes are some of the characteristics of American parenting in Vermont, it cannot be stressed enough that the childrearing landscape of the American family is diverse and incorporates a multitude of beliefs, values, and practices that stem from cultures across the globe.

Conclusion

The childrearing challenges that come with New Americans’ social adjustment to the host community calls for further investigation. Because no currently available research identifies common parenting beliefs and practices, the first research question concerns the philosophies and customs that are characteristic of New Americans residing in Vermont. Social service agencies and local government are asking for more information on this topic as they currently rely on anecdotal reports. The literature suggests that research in this area will offer New Americans’ insights into values of
interdependent childrearing, filiality coupled with respect for elders, and an authoritarian approach to parenting.

The second research question concerning how New American parents view the challenges of parenting in a new cultural context will not only illuminate the perspectives of New Americans living in Chittenden County, Vermont, but will also examine if their experiences are consistent with refugees and immigrants elsewhere as described in the literature. It is anticipated that some of the challenges may be mitigated by the fact that Vermont has both informal and formal organizing communities for various ethnic subgroups within the county to help with preserving some cultural and religious traditions, social adjustment, resources, and the like.

The literature points to the tensions between Western values of personal agency or individualistic orientation compared with more collectivist approaches to childrearing. Investigating how Vermont’s New Americans’ parenting beliefs and practices have changed to adapt to the host culture will help explain the extent to which families have assimilated to Vermont. Based on the literature, it is presumed that there may be particular beliefs and practices that parents would like to retain but find incompatible with U.S. and Vermont culture such that it may cause tension for families.

Fourth, probing for childrearing beliefs, values, and practices that New Americans have managed to retain in resettlement can further clarify cultural strengths that may be compatible with, or at the least not run afoul of, Vermont standards or expectations. Such retained practices may affect a sense of belonging to the community without having to relinquish one’s previous identity in order to acculturate.
Lastly, examining the extent to which New American parents feel comfortable with changes in their parenting approach in their resettled environment is critical to better understanding their perspectives. Mixed feelings of both satisfaction and unease with adaptation are expected as parents may be grieving the loss of some customs while embracing others.

Answering these research questions is essential for increasingly culturally diverse communities to thrive while also maximizing the social capital available to the community. Thus far, researchers have fallen short of doing so as they have forgone asking refugees and immigrants for their perspectives on their cultural practices of childrearing that can complement and co-exist with dominant cultural practice. Barriers to intercultural relationships among New Americans and members of the dominant culture with respect to retention of, and adaptation to, various cultural practices of childrearing are prevalent. Specifically, parenting styles, rapidly changing roles and responsibilities within the family structure, and understanding and expectations of the roles of community members affect intercultural relationships. With regard to childrearing, researchers and service providers have failed to see new arrivals as part of communities’ social capital.

The essence of intercultural relationships in the parenting context needs to be further developed. This research is vital to identify the potential contribution that New Americans can offer their communities in understanding who they are and what they bring to the childrearing experience. Community members, including social service providers and educators, continue to assess and respond to childrearing situations with
minimal awareness or knowledge of cultural childrearing practices of New Americans that can be compatible with dominant cultural practices. It is time for the voices of the newest community members to be heard in an effort to facilitate further intercultural exchange. All of our community members have something to gain by engaging in an intercultural process and from the potential innovations that can develop from such a process.
CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

This chapter provides the rationale for the research design. It begins with a statement of the research questions and guiding issues. It explains the sampling and recruitment process and delineates the research procedures for this dissertation study. Ethical considerations are provided, along with how data and confidentiality were managed. Details about procedures for securing research participants’ consent is provided. Information about the research instruments and data analysis plan are also presented within this chapter. Lastly, research design limitations are explained and the chapter concludes with a summary of the design rationale and a restatement of the research questions and accompanying hypotheses.

Research Questions and Guiding Issues

1) What are the common parenting beliefs and practices that are characteristic of New Americans residing in Vermont?

Guiding issue: The literature suggests that New Americans’ will identify strongly held values of interdependent childrearing, filiality coupled with respect for elders, and an authoritarian approach to parenting will be offered.

2) How do New American parents view the challenges of parenting in a new cultural context?

Guiding issue: Research suggests that preserving some cultural and religious traditions may be helpful in mediating social adjustment in the newly resettled state. Both informal and formal organizing communities for various ethnic subgroups may also help with preserving
some cultural and/or religious traditions, social adjustment, resources, and the like.

3) How have Vermont’s New American parenting beliefs and practices changed to adapt to the host culture?

Guiding issue: The literature indicates that there are particular beliefs and practices that parents would like to retain but find incompatible with US/Vermont culture such that it may cause tension for families.

4) How do retained childrearing beliefs, values and practices influence adjustment in resettlement?

Guiding issue: Retained practices may affect a sense of belonging to the community without having to relinquish one’s previous identity in order to acculturate.

5) To what extent are New American parents comfortable with changes in their parenting approach in their resettled environment?

Guiding issue: Research implies that mixed feelings about adaptation are expected as parents may be grieving the loss of some customs while embracing others.

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative methodology with data collection carried out in two phases, explained below. Three essential components need to be considered when selecting research methodology: 1) philosophical beliefs about what constitutes knowledge, 2) approaches to investigation, and 3) particular inquiry techniques (Creswell, 2003). To address the epistemology underlying the research questions, this researcher ascribed to a social constructivist paradigm. This paradigm assumes that understanding the human experience is subjective, comprised of multiple meanings, and
that inquiry is dependent on the research process itself along with the intention to interpret the meanings that participants ascribe to events (Creswell, 2003).

A social constructivist framework suggests a qualitative methodological approach for this study. While several definitions of qualitative research exist, it can simply be defined as “a process of examining and interpreting data in order to elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.1). Strategies of qualitative research are flexible, inductive, and minimally structured compared with quantitative methodology’s highly structured approach with interpretation based on numerical data and a deductive reasoning method (Guest et al., 2012). Qualitative research is appropriate for encouraging the development of a deep understanding of research participants’ perspectives on social contexts and activities (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). With qualitative methodology, data analysis is comprised of words or images to identify patterns and themes while assuming that human behavior is “dynamic, situational, social, & personal” (Poggione, 2012, n.p.). Qualitative research is not only concerned with a rich description of the research subject’s lived experience, but also pays attention to the researcher’s ability to suspend one’s external framework and “judgments about the realness of the phenomena” (Finlay, 2009, p.8).

Furthermore, for the purposes of this dissertation research, a qualitative methodology was selected because such an approach allows for the discovery from the “point of view of the people who participate” (Flick, von Kardorff & Steinke, 2004, p. 4). A qualitative approach enables the researcher to unearth the substantial narrative of social realities, taking into account the participants’ subjective and socially constructed
perspectives. It enables the exploration of the unknown, rather than focusing on a predetermined concept. This methodology was also selected because it follows the basic premise that power relationships influence the context of cultural processes (Flick, von Kardoff & Steinke, 2004). Therefore, this approach fits well with the purpose of this research as it explores cultural responses to childrearing with the goal of generating theory from the breadth of participants’ knowledge (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007). New theory can then be disseminated for the purposes of enhancing intercultural relationships within the community.

Finally, research methodology using techniques from Grounded Theory (GT) and Applied Thematic Analysis (ATA) were selected to explore themes of New Americans’ childrearing beliefs and practices. GT consists of a set of procedures and techniques to build theory from analyzed data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data are analyzed for concepts, context, and the process that emerges in the analysis. Explained quite simply, GT involves four major steps: transcript review, identification of possible themes, comparisons and contrasts of themes, including the identification of structure among them, and the development of theoretical models, constantly checked against the data (Bernard & Ryan, 1998, as cited in Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012). Data are coded and then concepts are examined and constantly compared “across their properties and dimensions…[in order to] develop an explanatory framework that integrates the concepts into a core category” (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2007, p.1373). Theory is then built from the core category.
Similarly, ATA follows the four major steps of GT. Like GT, it also involves systematic data processing and comparison of themes, emerging theory, and data points. However, unlike GT, ATA diverges in the forth step as it is less concerned with developing a theoretical model and more attentive to the application of the research to explain human behavior, feelings, and cognitions in relation to a specific research question. The primary concern, therefore, is phenomenological; to understand the meaning that people give their lived experience in a context relative to specific research questions (Guest et al., 2012). For example, ATA follows a systemic, iterative process throughout the data coding and analysis, constantly refining codes and themes. Further, ATA can also be used with larger data sets, and employ quantification methods to explain phenomena. In other words, ATA is particularly helpful with investigating larger observations and the concern with the findings’ applicability to systems change compared with GT’s focus on smaller observations and theory model development (Guest et al., 2012).

Phase I of this dissertation study was concerned with identifying themes with regard to New Americans’ perspectives and experiences with raising children in Vermont. As themes emerged from the data, they were eventually categorized, refined, and a model of key factors influencing childrearing was constructed. Therefore, GT was used for Phase I in order to build theory from the data. Phase II, however, was concerned with more specific questions which emerged from the theory developed in phase I. Therefore, ATA methods were chosen to analyze Phase II. A more detailed description of the two phases is provided below.
This dissertation study was vetted through, and approved by, Clemson University’s Institutional Review Board to ensure that the rights and protections of human subjects were upheld throughout this two-phase study. Consistent with Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) grounded theory approach, purposive and theoretical sampling techniques provided an opportunity to maximize the development of concepts and theory. Phase 1 consisted of a preliminary, exploratory focus group study to ascertain themes of childrearing beliefs and practices among New Americans in Chittenden County, Vermont. The second phase of the study involved conducting in-depth, follow-up interviews with individual participants.

**Phase I**

**Sampling and recruitment.** The targeted number of participants for phase I included ten (10) per focus group with four focus groups for a total of 40 participants. Participants consisted of Chittenden County, Vermont parents who are refugees or immigrants, age 18 or older, proficient English speakers, who have raised or are currently raising children in Vermont.

Initially, outreach contact was made with the Director of the State of Vermont Refugee Office to discuss the research project. This contact led to an invitation to participate in the monthly meetings of the Refugee and Immigrant Service Providers’ Network (RISPNet). RISPNet is comprised of service providers and representatives of agencies and political office holders (e.g., Senator Leahy’s and the City of Burlington) working with refugees and immigrants throughout the state of Vermont, but primarily serving Chittenden County. At these monthly meetings, the research project and the
request for assistance with recruiting volunteer focus group participants was presented. Fliers announcing focus group sessions were also distributed in these meetings (see Appendix A).

Additionally, specific outreach to the executive director of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, the social work coordinator at the New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma and Connecting Cultures programs serving refugees, the director of the Visiting Nurse Association’s Family Room, the Director of the Winooski Public Library, and to the executive director of the Sara Holbrook Community Center in order to share the research study’s purpose and request their assistance in recruiting volunteer participants. A phone conversation, followed up by e-mail with a copy of the informed consent form (see appendix B) was shared with each of these providers, along with a copy of the flier for distribution. Both materials were also vetted through the Coordinator of Interpreter Services at the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program and English Language Learning instructors whom the researcher knew personally to ensure that the language was as user-friendly as possible for the New American population. Particular snack items were also discussed with the Coordinator of Interpreter Services to ensure that any snacks provided during focus group sessions did not infringe on any dietary restrictions and were culturally sensitive and appropriate. One other community center serving the refugee and immigrant population within Chittenden County was contacted, but unresponsive. All participating agencies provided a signed approval letter or e-mail to the researcher prior to any recruitment activity or data collection.
**Procedures for phase I.** Venues for hosting Phase I focus group sessions included the Winooski Public Library, the Visiting Nurse Association’s Family Room, and the advanced English Language Learning classrooms in the Sarah Holbrook Community Center. The locations were selected because they were easily accessible by New Americans as they are centrally located within one or the other major city centers in Chittenden County, frequented by New Americans, and within walking distance and on the bus line. Furthermore, each of their Executive Directors was eager to offer her space and assistance with recruitment. Snacks and childcare were also provided during each focus group.

Each participant was invited to participate in one of four focus group sessions that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. The focus group sessions began with the researcher distributing the Informed Consent Form (Appendix B) and reading it aloud for the group. Once consent was given, demographic data about age, household membership, number of children raised, faith identification, region of origin, education attainment level, employment, and proximity to similar cultures were collected via survey (see Appendix C for the Phase I Focus Group Demographic Survey). The researcher also read the survey aloud for participants and assisted with transcription when participants did not have command of written English. Following survey completion and collection, the researcher placed a small, digital recorder on a table in the center of the group meeting for future exact transcription by a professional transcriptionist. A pledge of confidentiality was obtained (please see Appendix D for the Transcriber’s Pledge of Confidentiality) prior to any transcription. For back-up purposes the researcher took notes during the interviews.
The researcher explained to participants that no names would be used and should a name be mentioned inadvertently while recording, the transcriptionist was instructed to leave it out of the transcript.

As with the flier and survey instruments, the interview schedule was also vetted through professionals who work with, and teach, English language learners to simplify the language and ensure that concepts were as clear as possible for non-native English speakers. The researcher began the group interview with the first question on the focus group interview schedule of guiding questions (See Appendix E), asked a guiding question, listened for the response, asked clarifying questions, continued with another question within the topic, and repeated the process. Occasionally, the researcher gently redirected participants who strayed from the topic into an area that was irrelevant to childrearing. Once one area was covered, the researcher moved on to the next question. In this way, participants could easily be redirected to the topic, if need be. Further, the researcher’s clinical experience in social work practice enabled her to easily guide interviews, paraphrase, and redirect. When confusion about the meaning of English words or concepts arose, the researcher would paraphrase and use language or examples that other people from the same culture had shared that helped to explain the concept.

Within two focus groups, translation from English into Mai Mai, Bosnian, or Nepali was needed on occasion. In these sessions, one of the participants volunteered to translate when needed. Although translation has the potential to influence data, every attempt was made to minimize the threat to the validity of the study. Required translation
usually involved occasional words rather than full concepts, which further minimized any threat to the validity of the study.

There were no follow-up sessions. Should participants have appeared or expressed discomfort at any time, they would have been reminded that they may stop participating in the study at any time and leave. The investigator is an experienced Master's level Social Worker and was prepared to assist any participant who experienced distress, either by intervening directly in the event of acute distress, or by referring the participant to a local counseling center. No such support was needed.

**Phase II**

**Sampling and recruitment.** Sampling and recruitment for phase II of this dissertation study was comprised of a purposive sample of thirty five individual interviews with Bosnian, Bhutanese Nepali, and Somali refugees and one impromptu group interview with Bhutanese Nepali parents who are all parenting or have parented children in Vermont. Bhutanese Nepali, Bosnian, and Somali ethnic groups were selected because they represent the largest, most recent New American populations residing in Vermont (Vermont State Refugee Office, Vermont Agency of Human Services, 2014). Moreover, each of these native cultures held collectivist childrearing practices prior to migration. Initially using criteria sampling procedures, participants who met the ethnic criteria were recruited from focus group sessions for more in-depth individual interviews if they so chose, and through announcements and invitations to participate through the RISPNet, The Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, the New England Survivors of Torture and Trauma and Connecting Cultures programs, and the Sara Holbrook
Community Center. Additionally, the researcher reached out to the executive directors of the Association of Africans Living in Vermont, The Bhutanese Association of Vermont, the community liaisons at the Winooski and Burlington School Districts, and through networking with personal contacts who knew Bhutanese Nepali, Bosnian, or Somali Bantu refugees who might meet research participation requirements of being over eighteen years of age and parenting or have parented children in Vermont, and proficient in spoken English.

Outreach included phone calls and e-mails to the possible referral sources listed above, with a follow-up e-mail accompanied by a copy of the IRB-approved oral consent script (see Appendix F for a copy of the oral consent) which was also vetted through the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program’s coordinator of interpreter services to ensure clarity, understandability, and cultural sensitivity. Following this outreach method, the researcher used a snowball or chain method of purposive sampling to recruit additional participants. Following their individual interview, phase II participants were invited to reach out to peers with the same study participation criteria in order to share their experience with the interview and researcher, and inquire if the peer would consider participating in the study. If the peers expressed an interest, they were given the researcher’s contact information and were asked to contact her directly.

**Procedures for phase II.** Research participants were given a choice of locations to meet. Initially, interviews were held in a private room at the public library, the O’Brien Community Center, or in the Namaste Community Center. These locations were selected because of location and familiarity to potential participants. However, when individuals
began contacting the researcher to inquire about participation, many of them asked to be interviewed in their homes. Therefore, the researcher sent a supplemental request to the Clemson IRB to approve in-home interviews with participants. This request was approved so participants were also given the choice of being interviewed at home. The in-home interviews allowed for easy scheduling since they were only dependent on the participant’s schedule and not the availability of the community-based venue. Moreover, this environment, if chosen, allowed for the participant to feel the most ‘at home’ during the interview. The researcher was sensitive to possible effects that the various interviewing venues may have had on the study. Precautions were taken to minimize distractions and preserve confidentiality. Meeting in a quiet, separate, private room of the venue was a priority. With the in-home interviews, occasionally children and other family members interrupted. The researcher stopped the interviews at those points until the parent requested to continue or the distractions were addressed.

Interviews were conducted over a four-month period in the fall of 2014 and lasted between one to two hours in length. All but two interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed. With each of the two interviews that were not audio recorded, the study participant requested that the interview not be audio recorded. However, each participant agreed that the researcher could take notes during the interview sessions. Thus the interviews which were not recorded were analyzed by the texts of the researcher’s field notes. Just as with Phase I, interviews were audio-recorded and followed the same transcription protocol as Phase I. Also similar to Phase I, should participants have appeared or expressed discomfort at any time, they would have been reminded that they
may stop participating in the study at any time and leave. The investigator was prepared to follow the protocol above, although no such support was needed during this phase either.

Prior to the interviews, the researcher shared the oral consent script with each participant and read it aloud to secure consent. (Appendix F). Because only three criteria-eligible focus group members volunteered to participate in the individual interviews, another slightly modified demographic survey was administered to each individual participant (See Appendix G for a copy of the individual participant demographic survey instrument). Once consent was secured, the researcher administered the demographic survey to participants. She offered to read the survey aloud and transcribe responses, if needed.

As with phase I, during the interviews themselves, the digital recorder was placed on a table or chair within audio recording range. The researcher would ask the guiding questions and occasionally gently redirect participants who strayed from the topic into an area that was irrelevant to childrearing. Because guiding questions were grouped under topic areas (see appendix H for phase II individual interview schedule), the researcher first introduced the categories about which she would be asking questions. Then she began with the first topic, asked a guiding question, listened for the response, asked clarifying questions, continued with another question within the category, and repeated the process. Once one category was covered, the researcher moved on to the next category. In this way, participants knew general areas to anticipate and could easily be redirected to the topic, if need be. Again, the researcher’s clinical experience in social
work practice enabled her to easily guide interviews, paraphrase, and redirect. When confusion about the meaning of English words or concepts arose, the researcher would paraphrase and use language or examples that other people from the same culture had shared that helped to explain the concept.

The phase II group interview with Bhutanese Nepali parents was an impromptu occurrence. Originally, this researcher was scheduled to conduct a follow-up individual interview with a Bhutanese Nepali father who participated in the phase I study. He mentioned that he had a couple of friends who also fit the criteria for participation in the study and wanted to participate. The researcher sent the parent a copy of the informal consent oral script to share with his friends and invite them to participate following his interview. However, once the parent arrived for the follow-up interview, he had brought fourteen Bhutanese Nepali parents with him to be interviewed. Some of these parents had limited English proficiency. The researcher chose to facilitate an impromptu group interview instead of individual interviews due to time constraints of both participants and the availability of the interviewing space at the community center. Further, the participant whom the researcher originally invited to be individually interviewed occasionally served as an interpreter during the group interview. Therefore, this group interview’s transcript was coded as case one within phase II of this study because the researcher used the phase II interview schedule (Appendix H) rather than the phase I schedule.

Throughout the data collection process, individual interviews were conducted and analyzed. Once the researcher was no longer hearing new information data saturation was
reached. At this point, the researcher no longer interviewed additional participants, but rather engaged in additional transcript review and further in-depth analysis of the data.

**Ethical Considerations**

There were no physical risks anticipated with this study. Psychological discomfort may have come from responding to questions about oneself. However, this discomfort was transitory in nature and no greater than the anxiety encountered in the normal course of living. There were no direct benefits to the participants, but the information provided may contribute to improving professional development and social service delivery, and to building more responsive communities. Should participants have appeared or expressed discomfort at any time, they would have been reminded that they may stop participating in the study at any time. As mentioned before, this researcher is an experienced Master's level social worker and was prepared to assist any participant who experienced distress, either by intervening directly in the event of acute distress, or by referring the participant to a local counseling center.

**Data Management and Confidentiality**

All focus group and individual interview demographic surveys, recordings, transcriptions, and meeting notes were kept in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s primary office at the University of Vermont and were only accessible by the researcher. The identity of all study participants was kept strictly confidential unless they had given express written consent to acknowledge their participation in disseminating data. Participant identity and responses were coded to protect their confidentiality. Once audio
recordings were transcribed, the digital recordings were erased in accordance with Clemson University’s Research Data Access and Retention Policies.

**Consent**

In an effort to protect human subjects and honor their rights and welfare, the dissertation study proposal, including all focus group invitations, consent forms, demographic surveys, and interview schedules, were reviewed and approved by Clemson University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB). Consent to participate in this research study was solicited at the beginning of both the focus group and individual participant interviews. The researcher both distributed the consent form (see Appendices B) and read it aloud to participants for Phase I, and used the oral consent (See Appendix F) for the individual participant interviews.

**Instruments**

In phase I, a brief demographic survey was distributed and collected at the beginning of the focus group interviews. Appendix C provides the sample phase I demographic survey.

In order to collect data from the focus group interviews, guiding questions were used to facilitate the group discussion. Appendix E provides focus group interview schedule. The guiding questions for phase I of this study were grounded in the literature review and extended to explore New Americans’ cultural expectations of parenting practices while sharing and comparing their observations of dominant culture’s practice.

In particular, examining New Americans’ parenting styles was essential. For example, participants were asked to describe their expectations of roles in relation to the
child’s education and compare that with their observations of American-born parents’ expectations. Questions about how discipline is managed in their homelands and compared with Vermont were asked. Additionally, participants were asked about family rules in order to further explore authoritarian, authoritative, and permissive parenting styles. Examples of corporal punishment, restricted and constant supervision or monitoring of all socialization and social media indicated more authoritarian parenting styles. Shared decision-making examples, parent-child communication exchange, and natural consequences as a response to misbehavior represented a more authoritative approach to parenting. Lastly, encouraged child assertiveness and decision-making, and opportunities for children to explore and develop their own self-regulation skills signified parents’ permissive style of parenting.

In terms of exploring collectivist and individualist cultural aspects of childrearing, questions about who help parents to raise their children provided important information. Indicators such as extended family and neighbors were affiliated with more of a collectivist approach to childrearing. Moreover, provided support that extended family and community members offer parents, such as monitoring children’s behavior outside the home and school attendance, providing gratis childcare, feeding children in the community, and the reciprocity of these activities all contribute to an understanding of a collectivist approach to childcare. On the other hand, expressions of children’s behavior being solely a private matter between the child and her parents, not getting involved with other community member’s children if there are communication issues or problematic behavior in public, and restricting one’s communication with parents of other non-related
children about childrearing issues all indicated more of an individualistic approach to childrearing.

To better understand culture with regard to childrearing, parents were asked to compare and contrast their observations of cultural differences and similarities between their cultures of origin and their American-born counterparts with regard to their expectations and hopes for raising children. For example, parents were queried about expectations of parental roles in the education of children. These questions extended beyond the literature to specifically understand cultural expectations and observations of the local New American parenting community in Vermont.

Similar to phase I, phase II individual interview participants completed a brief demographic survey prior to the interview. A copy of the survey instrument can be found in Appendix G. The individual interviews were also facilitated by the use of guiding questions. Appendix H provides the Phase II interview schedule. Guiding questions were categorized into four topic areas: Parenting belief and practices, family caregiving, role of rituals, and neighbors. Questions within these categories corresponded to the four key factors influencing childrearing (see Figure 2). Thirty-four codes were selected and grouped into six topics. Table II provides the codes and their related groups and frequencies. Groups and codes that directly correspond with specific research questions are designated in the chart with the research question and number (e.g., RQ1).

Data Analysis Plan

The data analysis plan was two-fold. In phase I, the descriptive data solicited from the demographic surveys was analyzed through the use of the Statistical Package for
Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22 (IBM SSPSS, 2013) in order to describe the research participants’ demographic information. In addition to analyzing the demographic data, anchored in grounded theory methodology for qualitative inquiry, this researcher used Corbin and Strauss’ (2008) processes for coding (including constant comparison and questions), theoretical sampling, memo and diagramming, and analysis. In this process, an iterative sampling process was used to develop concepts and theory emerging from data collected from the real life childrearing circumstances, experiences, and perspectives of New Americans in Vermont.

Theory, represented by the conceptual map (Figure 2: Key Factors Influencing Childrearing) emerged from several steps. Initially, the raw transcript data were focused and labeled as part of the first coding run. The second review of the raw data reexamined the codes and further focused the coding schema and developed categories. This step, also known as axial coding “because the coding occurs around the axis of a category,” relates and elaborates the properties and dimensions of the categories (Tjitra, 2011). Also during this stage of analysis the developed relationships and categories were repeatedly verified against the data. Coding was then further studied to develop highly refined themes thus leading to the development of the conceptual map.

Based upon both the literature and concepts derived from the phase I data itself, twenty-three codes emerged. The codes, representing those concepts, were selected and coded through HyperRESEARCH software for analysis of qualitative data. Codes covered an extensive array of areas such as ‘adaptation of parenting strategies’ and ‘biculturalism,’ to ‘proximity’ and ‘power differential.’
Table III: Phase I Codes, Definitions, and Frequencies provides the list of initial codes used in this phase of the dissertation research and their frequency in appearance in the focus groups. Codes were then grouped into four themes, which emerged as influential factors in childrearing (see Figure 2 for a conceptual map of the Key Factors Influencing Childrearing). The Key Factors Influencing Childrearing model emerged directly from the data in phase I of this dissertation study.

Differing from the phase I analysis’ use of grounded theory to develop the model of Key Factors Influencing Childrearing (Figure 2), applied thematic analysis was employed for phase II of this study in order to further investigate specific research questions and the findings’ applicability to affect systems change. Therefore, distinct phase II data content areas emerged and corresponded to somewhat different themes than the phase I data offered (represented in Table II: Grouping, Codes, and Frequencies). For example, although distinct from the theme of ‘Neighboring’ in phase I, phase II identified themes of the ‘Meaning of Neighbor’ and ‘Environment.’ These two themes correspond with ‘Neighboring’ as they investigate some elements of the neighborhood context that involve neighboring. Likewise, phase II’s theme of ‘Parenting Beliefs/Values’ corresponds to some extent with phase I’s ‘Family Caregiving.’ Similarly, phase II’s ‘Parenting Practice’ can be linked with ‘Parenting Style’ and ‘Managing Biculturalism’ can relate to ‘Expectations in a Bicultural Context.’ The phase II theme of the ‘Meaning of Adulthood,’ however, was a separate category in phase II, although it may relate to ‘Parenting Beliefs/Values’ in phase II and ‘Family Caregiving’ in phase I.
Following, and at times simultaneously with, coding data, memoing (written records of analysis) contributed to the development of the conceptual map. This process afforded the opportunity to theorize the relationship of ideas and codes. Also as part of this process, integrating the literature also supported the development of a theoretical outline of the prominent concepts. Diagramming (visual depictions of conceptual relationships) also served to illuminate and contribute to the development of the key factors influencing childrearing. Figure 3 provides a conceptual map of Grounded Theory technique.
Table II: Phase I Codes, Definitions, and Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation</td>
<td>change or adjustment</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behavioral Issues</td>
<td>Antisocial behaviors, challenging ways of acting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biculturalism</td>
<td>Presence of two different cultures concurrently</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broken Families</td>
<td>Families separated or divorced</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal responsibility</td>
<td>Shared responsibility within the community</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>Methods for acting in accordance with rules</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress code</td>
<td>Expectation of appropriate attire</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectations</td>
<td>Regarding something likely to happen</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familism</td>
<td>Placing family needs above the individual’s needs</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hope</td>
<td>Feeling of wanting something to happen</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independence</td>
<td>Freedom from parental control</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscommunication</td>
<td>Failure to communicate effectively</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighboring</td>
<td>Local relationships characterized by trust, friendship, and support</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental authority</td>
<td>Parental rule enforcement</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power differential</td>
<td>Imbalance of power</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proximity</td>
<td>Closeness</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>Expressing a particular way about acknowledging the importance of a person</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>The act of keeping cultural practices</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals</td>
<td>Something that is done as a part of a ceremony and completed the same way each time</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rules</td>
<td>A statement about what is or is not permitted in a particular situation</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervision</td>
<td>An act of watching and directing behavior</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching responsibility</td>
<td>Instilling an expectation of a behavior that is expected or required</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td>Something held in importance to promote family functioning or viewed to strengthen the social fabric of society</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table III: Phase II Grouping, Codes, and Frequencies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Environment</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Challenges</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Managing Biculturalism (RQ2)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Belonging</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feelings About Adaptation (RQ4)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaning of Time</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outreach Strategy within Community</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction (RQ5)</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Adjustment (RQ4)</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning of Adulthood</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Definition of Adult</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Meaning of Neighbor (RQ2)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collectivist Culture/Interdependent Parenting</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Involvement</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Socializing</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighboring</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting Beliefs/Values (RQ1)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Familism/Filiality</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical Access</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parental Communication</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals and Cultural Traditions</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteerism (RQ3)</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Ethic</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Parenting Practices (RQ1)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adaptation (RQ3)</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritarian</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authoritative</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permissive</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers to Practicing Traditions</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges in Vermont (RQ2)</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s Freedom</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influence of Trauma History</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shame</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Respect</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2: Key Factors Influencing Childrearing

- Familism
- Independence
- Power Differential
- Respect
- Supervision
- Values

- Adaptation
- Discipline
- Rules
- Supervision
- Parental Authority
- Behavioral Issues
- Dress Code
- Teaching Responsibility
- Retention

- Proximity
- Expectations
- Supervision
- Independence
- Values
- Teaching Responsibility
- Communal Responsibility

- Rules
- Hope
- Parental Authority
- Discipline
- Expectations
- Supervision
- Miscommunication/Misunderstandings
- Independence
- Behavioral Issues
- Dress Code
- Teaching Responsibility Power Differential
Similarly to the coding of focus group data, transcripts for each of the thirty-seven phase II individual interviews were also coded through HyperRESEARCH software for analysis of qualitative data. Phase II followed a similar format as phase 1, but focused more on ATA to identify key themes in the transcripts and transform them into codes and the aggregated codebook, as well as data reduction techniques, and some quantification of themes. With ATA, themes were illuminated as the researcher looked (modified) structural codebook that used the interview schedule as a foundation for code development. Lastly, unlike in phase I or with GT, some themes were quantified to help refine the codebook. Code frequencies were also helpful in highlighting some patterns among the data that may have otherwise been overlooked. This examination of quantified
data also led to re-reading of the data, re-coding data and some refinement of the coding schema.

**Limitations**

Because this was a qualitative study involving a pilot study of four focus groups with New Americans and follow-up individual interviews with Vermont’s largest resettled populations (Bosnian, Bhutanese Nepali, and Somali Bantu), and interpretative data analysis, some limitations include sample selection, interpreter bias, and an inability to generalize the data findings and interpretations. For example, only resettled immigrants involved with organizations and schools served by social service agencies in the Chittenden County, Vermont area were invited to participate. Of these participants, all were self-selected to engage in the focus groups and interviews. Further, the sampling was not necessarily representative of each of the ethnic groups. Since participants were required to speak English, it was likely that the participants achieved a higher standard of education than their non-English speaking peers.

Additionally, English proficiency may have also had some influence on acculturation because English proficiency has allowed these New Americans to more effectively observe and understand dominant culture communication and behavior. Therefore, participants were not necessarily representative of the intended New American populations of study, potentially contributing to sample selection bias. This potential bias was addressed by the researcher’s extensive and encompassing outreach process for recruiting participants, as described above. Data saturation was also used to minimize
sample bias. Data saturation occurred when interviews with individuals were conducted beyond the point of generating new information.

Interpreter bias involves the subjectivity that the researcher may introduce into qualitative inquiry and one’s findings. With qualitative research, researchers “tend to believe that situations are complex, so they attempt to portray many dimensions rather than to narrow the field” (Rajendran, 2001). This dissertation study considered various and complex dimensions of New Americans’ perspectives on childrearing. Therefore, in an effort to minimize interpreter bias, this researcher employed field note methodology. Maintaining field notes with reflections on personal reactions, assumptions, and prejudices that emerged during data collection processes enabled the researcher to reflect on her biases and adjust her approach and interpretation appropriately.

Summary

This research was grounded in intersectionality theory and built from the conceptual framework described above. Qualitative methods were selected to explore and understand research participants’ perspectives on parenting in Vermont. As Kondrat (1995) pointed out, the historical discourse of knowledge is generated solely by privileged voices and with little appreciation for the influence of informal, ‘lived’ experiences or cultural knowledge. This qualitative study offered the opportunity to go beyond the more modernist approach to child welfare and childrearing. Instead, it offered an opportunity to give voice to newly resettled Americans through the development and valuing of intercultural exchange of knowledge in a way that enables an innovative influence of new knowledge and theory development.
CHAPTER 4
RESULTS

Throughout this dissertation, providing an opportunity for New Americans to voice their story of childrearing in resettlement has been a critical value of this researcher. Therefore, illustrative quotations from multiple participants culled from the transcripts of the interviews were used to capture the depth, richness, and complexity of the phenomena. This chapter organizes and presents the major themes that emerged from the data with supporting evidence from both the focus group interviews and individual participant interviews as they relate to the research questions of this study. Several sections are included in this chapter. The first section focuses on the demographics and analysis of the initial four focus group discussions that comprised the preliminary stage of this dissertation study (phase I). Attention is then drawn to the unanswered questions that led to further investigation in phase II of the study. The chapter continues with the analysis of phase II demographics and presents the five key research findings. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key findings.

Phase I

Phase I consisted of four focus groups with a total of forty-seven (47) participants in Chittenden County, Vermont. Participants included refugees and immigrants primarily from Sub-Saharan Africa, East Asia and Eastern Europe. Prior to the start of each focus session, every participant completed a demographic survey. Frequency data were analyzed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (IBM Corp. Released 2013.)
Four themes emerged from the phase I data. Family caregiving, parenting style, expectations in a bicultural context, and neighboring each emerged from the data as major themes with regard to New Americans raising their children in Vermont. Each theme and supporting evidence will be presented below.

**Family caregiving.** Family caregiving emerged from the data in response to the question “What does it mean to care for family members in your culture,” expanding, for example, Schwartz et al. (2010) and other previous researchers’ constructs of familism and filial piety in relation to childrearing. Familism, respect, supervision, independence, power differential, and values were all themes which emerged and could be grouped as components of family caregiving. Research identified that familism contributes to a strong sense of familial duty as well as social connections and supports (Schwartz et al., 2010). Consistent with the findings from the literature review, familism was discussed extensively among all of the focus groups. Many focus group participants talked about their culture’s practice of joint family living (living with multigenerational extended kin). As one participant explained,

> Very, very important in our culture as well. We have grandparents, parents, uncles, aunties, mostly living together in most of the situations...helping each other. Here [in Vermont], we have been able to you know do things well because of these aspects of our culture. Our parents take care of our kids, which mean grandparents take care of their grandchildren. You know they can’t work so the children, the kids’ parents can go and work and
make money and pay the rent and do their own things. So this is very, very important... (Focus Group #2 participant)

Table IV: Phase I Demographic Data About Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Focus Group #1</th>
<th>Focus Group #2</th>
<th>Focus Group #3</th>
<th>Focus Group #4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Frequency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n=3</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=4</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Less than 34</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 or older</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
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<td>0</td>
<td>57</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Divorced</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
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As one participant explained,

Very, very important in our culture as well. We have grandparents, parents, uncles, aunties, mostly living together in most of the situations...helping each other. Here [in Vermont], we have been able to you know do things well because of these aspects of our culture. Our parents take care of our kids, which mean grandparents take care of their grandchildren. You know they can’t work so the children, the kids’ parents can go and work and make money and pay the rent and do their own things. So this is very, very important... (Focus Group #2 participant)

A few other participants shared their rationale to the discussion of familism and joint family living, clarifying that,
I think also some parents they like to live with their [adult] kids. Like in China kids really appreciate like if my parents give me life, they worked really hard to send me to school... when I work I just want to live with them and take care of them. Like make them happy. (Focus Group #3 participant)

Other participants added,

It’s my responsibility to take care of my family member. (Focus Group #3 participant)

My responsibility, I – I give money for my parents, ... for my brother and sister ... I take care for my family. (Focus Group #4 participant)

These components of joint family living and familism contribute to the parenting experience for several reasons. First, joint families share responsibility for childrearing. Grandparents who live with their grandchildren often share responsibility of raising the children with the parents, including transmitting cultural values, customs, and language. Social support and multi-generational connections with extended family offer additional resources to parents as they raise their children.

Second, familism, including the associated fiscal responsibility, also contributes to parenting. One way that familism affects parenting is that it models the cultural centrality of family for the child. Parents who are taking care of their extended family demonstrate their value of familism to their child. While this provides an opportunity for the child to learn the importance of family caregiving, it potentially also can add stress to parenting. New American parents who value familism and feel the financial responsibility of providing not only for their nuclear family, but the extended family as well may be burdened with working longer hours away from the family to be able to
send money to other relatives living in their homeland. Consequently, parents may be more tired and perhaps less patient when parenting their children. Nonetheless, the social connections and support that New American parents identified through the benefits of joint living and familism were consistent with the findings of Chen (2006), Schwartz et al. (2010), and others.

Respect was another critical value of family caregiving that emerged from the focus groups. Consistent with the literature (Tajima & Harachi, 2010), demonstration of respect for elders was a common and shared value among New Americans in this study. Respect seemed to be viewed not just as a value of showing deference to one’s elders, but also as an indicator of parental or social control. Children’s demonstration of respect indicated that their parents were successfully raising their children to respond to parents’ and other adults’ directives at home and in the community. As one Somalian mother explained,

_I want about control...his parents and his grandparents and grandfather, all his family. His family respectful, and he say welcome the parents._ (Focus Group #2 participant)

Similarly, another parent observed,

_So the kids of our country they are very, very polite...So to respect everything. But here in America, most of the kids I see – I saw here – not very, very polite._ (Focus Group #3 participant)

Furthermore, as a Bosnian mother added,

_This is very difficult part of world to raise children. This is a very difficult country to raise children. I couldn’t believe disrespect I have seen here. The disrespect, because there_
is an expectation in our culture and respect is first. (Focus Group #2 participant)

While yet another parent concluded that,

The children [in the US], they do not respect their parents, that’s all. (Focus Group #4 participant)

New American parents across all four focus groups concurred that they observed American-born children disrespecting their parents and found this to be distressing. Some participants attributed this to little pressure on children in the U.S. to respect their parents, while several parents also explained that in their home countries disrespect from children was not tolerated (and was disciplined with corporal punishment).

Also as an indicator of respect, New American parents across each of the four focus groups agreed that in their cultures, children addressed adults formally or by title (for example, Auntie, Uncle, or First Sister).

Like in China it’s no more saying all like – older than you – you shouldn’t call their name. Even sisters we call first sister, second sister, like that. Yeah. (Focus Group #3 participant)

Likewise, participants commented that they found it disrespectful for American-born children to address adults by first name. Referring to adults by title is one method that crossed the various cultures as a means for instilling respect.

Supervision emerged as another element of family caregiving. New American parents discussed their feelings of isolation and struggles with managing supervision. For example, one Bosnian mother relied on her six year old to care for, and supervise, her infant when she first resettled in Vermont. She explained that,
... since I didn’t have anyone from the family here and it was a big burden on me to choose between parenting and hard work – two to three jobs to provide a decent life for my children... I will die with a wound on my heart... I felt like it was a huge burden on my older child [age 6] who was a mother to my child who was just a month old.... That I never had a time to be a mother to a baby. I never had a time to be a mother to a six years old, to sit and play... I think that families and neighbors are the most important to you because you don’t have to worry for a childcare. It’s not something – that you don’t even ask [in Bosnia]. They know that you have children. They come up to you. They help you out... (Focus Group #2 participant)

Other parents also spoke about older siblings being responsible for their younger siblings when living in Africa. For example, in Kenya,

*If you have another little – little big one they take together. Brothers or sisters. [The older ones] take them together to walk.* (Focus Group #1 participant)

Another mother from Somalia remarked,

*In Africa, here was a lot more freedom for children to explore and play and in the U.S., here in Vermont, you notice parents saying you need to be supervised at all times – like controlled...* (Focus Group #1 participant)

Consistent with Deng and Marlowe’s (2013) research on pre-migration family and community support, the Focus Group #1 Somali mother further clarified that because of the roles of extended family and neighbors in her community in Africa, children were outside playing much of the day, year-round unsupervised. However, children and parents alike knew that adults were nearby and available should a problem or issue arise.

In addition to differing expectations of supervision between some New American parents and those parents born in the U.S., some of the Muslim parents discussed their concerns about supervising social media and American influence on their children. A few
parents commented on limiting their children’s social media and computer time, and time with American peers outside of school. There seemed to be a dichotomy between expectations of supervision and control. For example, a Somali mother expressed her assessment that Vermont parents seem to be controlling in their supervision of their children playing outside, yet when it comes to perhaps guarding against too much American influence on her children, she too can appear controlling or providing extreme supervision. Explaining how she monitors her children’s exposure to American influence, for example, another mother said:

*Ok you know what? I know what’s my rules. My kids not going anyways that out with me. If they want to go somewhere I’m with them. If they doesn’t want about with them they stay home. Nobody going anywhere and it’s worked.* (Focus Group #1 participant)

Supervision, therefore, not only presented as an element of family caregiving, but also surfaced as a component of each of the other three key factors of childrearing (parenting style, expectations in relation to bilculturalism, and neighboring).

As with supervision, independence also seemed to be prevalent not only in family caregiving, but also cross into themes of neighboring and expectations in a bilcultural context. New Americans’ perceptions that children are viewed and treated as adults at age eighteen were consistently raised as a concern by several parents. They noted three different issues related to this. One issue involved children’s openness to their parents’ influence after age eighteen. New American parents’ perceptions were that American children have been socialized to be independent at age eighteen and therefore they seem less willing to listen to their parents or be open to their influence.
I...see here the independence that you give to your kids when they – when the kid is eighteen, when the kid is just eighteen, on the day of – on the day you have him the age of eighteen you are independent. So that’s – I think that’s not what we mean but that’s what kids think and so you know, in my culture it’s just not that even. Parents can still talk to the kids ...but you know the kids are not all on their own now. They still have to listen to their parents. (Focus Group #2 participant)

Weighing on their minds as they raise children biculturally, another concern parents raised about American culture of independence was their observations that young American-born adults often cohabit prematurely.

Here [in Vermont] ...they always start living with their boyfriends after eighteen and they are not ready by that time. (Focus Group #2 participant)

The third independence-related issue that New American parents remarked about was their observations of American-born children living independently from their parents after they turn eighteen.

... So what I see here are these kids are growing up and go to school and after high school she or he will be eighteen years, after that he or she move to other places. So he or she don’t be here with his family... (Focus Group # 3 participant)

... it’s a society pressure on them [eighteen year olds]. It’s not cool to say you’re living with your parents if you are eighteen. You know it kind of like you have to swallow your pride. (Focus Group #2 participant)

New Americans’ perceptions of American standards of adulthood, therefore, seem to be consistently focused on the age of majority. Participants expressed some incredulousness at the prospect of considering an eighteen year old an adult and wonder
how American parents can, as they see it, displace their children from the home at this point of maturation.

As with their grappling with notions of independence, New Americans also described some experiences with power differentials. New Americans discussed two significant points of power differentials. First, children were often relied upon to translate for parents since children were learning English faster than their parents. Parents spoke about children accompanying them to doctor’s appointments to translate and complete medical forms. They agreed that this changed the dynamic between parent and child and put the child in a position of power.

\begin{quote}
The kids have learned English, parents have not, and there is a power...transfer. The kids you know interpret for the parents in several cases and the parents have to now depend upon kids for when it was just the opposite, the kids depended on the parents. And here sometimes the kids might not interpret it right if it’s the school – if it’s about school and talking with teachers at parent-teacher conferences the student might make it -to make a story nicer for the parents to hear. So – so there are things as such here and yeah, I can see a huge, huge power [shift] and this is not – sometimes this is getting people into families into trouble. (Focus Group #2 participant)
\end{quote}

Even within the New American family itself, parents commented about communication problems. Parents referred to their children’s increasing facility in speaking English while their native language falls by the wayside, a concern also confirmed in Simms and Omaji’s research (1999). Simultaneously, the parents continue to struggle with their command of English, leading to some breakdown in parent-child communication:
We need...me, and my kids – interpreter. (Focus Group #4 participant)

Additionally, several parents added that immediately upon arrival in the U.S., families learn that it is illegal to “beat” children\(^2\). They explained that children are taught in school to phone 9-1-1 if they are being hit. Participants have explained that phoning 9-1-1 has become a source of power differential between parents and their children. Their perceptions are that some New American children are using this to manipulate their parents.

They [the children] know that its – to beat children, is against the law. So they’ll take advantage of that things they know... (Focus Group #3 participant)

The kids know. They’re very clever. They know. “I have the power.” They know it’s different from home country. It’s opposite now. (Focus Group #4 participant)

Lastly among the elements of family caregiving, New American parents spoke about their values of communal responsibility for childrearing. Because this value also interconnects with neighboring and parenting style, it will be presented below.

**Neighboring.** Participants in each of the four focus groups explained that, whether blood-related or not, neighbors helped raise the children in their country of origin. As with the literature on neighboring (for example, see Sunblad & Sapp, 2011), support, trust, and connections that exemplify the concept of neighboring were strongly identified as characteristic of New Americans’ homelands. Participants expressed that

\(^2\) Although this researcher did not ask parents to provide their definition of “beat,” they often used the term “beat” while demonstrating a range of corporal punishment examples including an open palm smack on the hand or leg to hitting a child on his head.
childrearing was, to some extent, a communal responsibility. As two parents from Focus Group #2 agreed,

*I think that families and neighbors are the most important to you because you don’t have to worry for a childcare. It’s not something – that you don’t even ask. They know that you have children. They come up to you. They help you out, and on top of it you [mothers] don’t work...*

*Every neighbor of yours and every friend of yours, or relative, has a right as much as you [to discipline] – not to hit the child, not to abuse, but just get an attention and talk to a child as- as a parent.*

Therefore, community members were responsible for assisting with childrearing, teaching responsibility, and providing supervision to the community’s children.

In comparing their experiences and expectations from their homelands, several participants commented that American-born families seem to parent in isolation from the community. In other words, they commented that American-born parents do not have nearby familial support for help with childcare nor do they have, or seem to want, their neighbors to take responsibility for other community members’ children. Yet some participants did note that they occasionally observed American-born parents who did want to partake in more of a community responsibility for raising children. However, participants acknowledged the tensions of their feelings of wanting to engage with the community’s children while understanding a message of American culture that suggests that parenting and childrearing is solely the responsibility of the parents and is a private matter, not a community one. As several New American parents compared their reliance on, and trust in, one’s neighbors to help with children, they remarked that,
...if I see someone disrespectful – you know, a member of my community is disrespectful or misbehaving...I’m very comfortable calling the parents and talking to them...[but in the larger community] ...we might in time, over time, learn to isolate ourselves [because we don’t think American-born parents would be appreciative of our phone call]. (Focus Group #2 participant)

In our country we say when the child is in your – in your sight it’s your child. It is your child. Now if the child is outside...[and] makes a bad thing I can – I can – I can react for to help the kids...So the reason the reason why sometime you see ...the child did not go to school he [the community member] can react to help that child to go to school. So like a community. (Focus Group #3 participant)

Yeah, I never thought about having fear from someone giving a candy or something to my child, but what I am hearing here from their parents, I get like oops. Don’t – I’m – I grew up in a culture and all the time my bags are full. I give the children all the time, and it’s like here, “Ooh I better not. I mean I might be accused of something.” I learned that and I also learned, “Ok, I had to tell my children do not accept because I am not comfortable with that.” It’s painful though with you think that children need a village to take care of them. (Focus Group #2 participant)

Many participants also concurred that they knew the family origins of most of their neighbors in their homelands. Generations of their families had grown up together, facilitating neighboring and perhaps a sense of trust. As one participant explained the reason for a sense of distrust with neighbors in Vermont, he observed,

So the people, they don’t have the good relationship [with their neighbors in Vermont] because they don’t know where – they don’t know origin originally. Where is from this guy? But in our culture, you know our – in our culture sometimes can live with your friends longtime. Sometimes your parents. The parent, they live together with those families, and also the kids are growing up with this family so it’s easy. (Focus Group #2 participant)
Yet here in Vermont, New Americans described their difficulties making connections with their neighbors and their assessment of Vermont communities as more distant, less involved.

*When I was in Nepal in my home, the neighbors we are very connected. I mean there are communication. They come together, they talk to each other. But here I don’t feel – I arrived here three months ago but I don’t see – even I don’t introduce with my neighbors. Here they say “hello” but that’s it. (Focus Group #2 participant)*

Another parent explained added that,

*I want to say …people here can …[be] really friendly since you meet everyone, everyone say hi to you but not – really close. …they’re not really open, like talk about ..a small things with you. Just still like faraway… (Focus Group #3 participant)*

Lastly another participant summed up her assessment of the depth of relationships with neighbors:

*The neighbors are complete strangers [in Vermont]. and back home neighbors feed your children. (Focus Group #2 participant)*

As with the literature on neighboring (Sunblad & Sapp, 2011), these findings also illustrate a discrepancy. The support, trust and connections that exemplify the concept of neighboring were strongly identified as characteristic of New Americans’ homelands. However, they described their neighboring expectations and experiences thus far living in Vermont very differently. Although some participants described their Vermont neighbors as friendly, they explained that few had the relationships with neighbors wherein they felt comfortable asking for help with childcare and other types of support with raising
children during a time of need. They said that they felt as though they could not depend on their neighbors for support such as this.

**Parenting Practices.** As some of the cultural differences described in family caregiving and neighboring emerged, parenting styles were also illuminated in the focus groups. Not only did examples of new rules emerge as a response to having to adapt to a new culture (e.g., not allowing children to accept food from strangers), but also themes of parental authority appeared. Parents mentioned noticing that American-born children challenge their parents’ authority,

...they say, “I don’t want to do this. I don’t want to go this” and they fighting about the parents...We never see about that kind. (Focus Group #1 participant)

However, some New American parents spoke about very clear rules (e.g., the use of social media and peer socialization) and consequences. For example, one mother from Somalia explained her use of ‘time out’ strategies.

*We take the kids and sit over there and he can’t go to spots and he doesn’t go anywhere until all...two days or three days...Or one month sometimes...Just going about his classroom, his room, and his sitting and his eating and his lay down in his bed. (Focus Group #1 participant)*

Although acknowledging that this is not the norm of all mothers from Somalia, one mother explained that her parenting style is very authoritarian and declared that if a child of hers breaks a rule,

*They go about another mother’s – I’m not mothers anymore....If they broke a rule I’m not the mother, and my husband, he knows about it ...The mother’s the rules. (Focus Group #1 participant)*
Another mother from Somalia spoke about raising ten children (six of whom are currently teenagers) and being asked frequently for parenting advice. She, too, spoke about very close monitoring of all of her children’s social interactions and strict rules.

As in the literature (for example, see Hattar-Pollara & Meleis, 1995), parents also discussed how they see their parental authority eroding in their acculturation process. For example, during a conversation about raising teenagers, a father explained,

*Teenagers are terrible. They’re making a lot of terrible. Cannot control...[it’s] not good...[it’s] international. But the difference be that teenager [is] under the control of the parent in our country.* (Focus Group #3 participant)

Similar to parents experiencing the erosion of their parental authority in Vermont, parents also spoke about some tensions in teaching responsibility to their children. For many New American parents, tensions abound about whether it is primarily their responsibility or the teacher’s responsibility to teach and instill children’s character development. Unlike in the dominant Vermont culture wherein character and value education are primarily viewed as parenting responsibilities, in many of the participants’ homelands teachers held a great deal of power and authority, and were responsible not only for academic education, but also for character and value education. For example,

*...in China like a teacher since they teach you like how to be a good person, teach you like knowledge, like they really spend their whole life to change your life like that so. Like here, like kids they think, “you’re our teacher. That’s what you should do.”* (Focus Group #3 participant)

A Bhutanese Nepali father added,

*So the other thing they are teaching our village kids in class, maybe it’s done in a different way [now] but we have a subject called value education. So teachers they teach the*
A Bosnian mother further explained the tension that she feels between her cultural expectations and adapting to her reality in Vermont:

…the teacher is well respected. Not that we didn’t have responsibilities as a parent but very little when it comes to schooling. Schooling was free and in our culture is the G-d; the doctor and the teacher. So you look up to a teacher and don’t question – you fully trust and believe your teacher and the way, whatever, you know they’re gonna – your child is gonna spend their day with the teachers. But also here [in Vermont], I have learned over the years that it’s much different and actually you have the every right to question a teacher and I have learned you have a reason to question a teacher too. (Focus Group #2 participant)

Therefore, confusing cultural messages about respect for authority and who is the authority figure emerged in resettlement. This further complicated New American parents’ understanding of their role when it comes to parenting and their child’s education.

Parents also specifically reported that their authority to reinforce their children’s education was somewhat diminished by what they attributed to American teachers’ perspective of who is, in fact, responsible for the educational outcomes.

...back in the day when you used to go to school and if you do a mistake when you go home the parent will ask you “Where is your homework? Where is this? Where is that?” But over here, when you’re done with school you go home, your parent will not ask you “Where’s your homework?” or anything like that. In the school when you go back, back in the day – I’m not talking about America. When you go to school the teacher will ask you “Where’s your homework?” if you’re not doing it the teacher will beat you up. That’s why we’re doing it. But over here we don’t do it because the teacher doesn’t care if you do it or not. That’s
the difference between America. (Focus Group #3 participant)

Similar to feeling their parental authority diminish in terms of reinforcing their children’s education, New American parents (like many of their American-born counterparts) grappled with their authority over their teenagers. For example, a Bosnian mother explained her concerns with navigating adolescence and the challenge to exert authority over the influence of drugs and alcohol in Vermont.

It’s everywhere – in schools and it’s kind of available more than accessible...Yeah too early age for alcohol and sex an all this introductions are too much [at as young an age as 13]. It’s horrible. I know that some parents try to stop but they can’t do anything about it. (Focus Group #2 participant)

Along with grappling with assimilation to American culture in terms of a diminishing authoritarian style of parenting, parents spoke about dress code as an element reflected in both themes of parenting style and expectations in a bicultural context. Some parents expressed concerns about American clothing style being provocative and that they would like their children to dress modestly, as reflective of their cultures.

Like in our country [Bhutan/Nepal]...even children also wear the dress, their body is fully covered and here it’s much more freedom so children also wear a very small dress. (Focus Group #2 participant)

Parents added that in their homelands, children were required to wear uniforms to school. Often times, the uniform would indicate what school the child attended. Therefore, if parents noticed a child in uniform but not attending school (for example, truant or tardy), they could identify what school the child should be at and follow up with the child and school. Consequently, uniforms made it more difficult for children to be inconspicuous.
Lastly, Bhutanese Napali parents also explained that their culture has particular
dress codes. For example, when a girl child approaches puberty, she is given

*A kind of adult dress. So this is given – I mean it’s kind of
like “you are now responsible person of the house so you
take the responsibilities of the home.” So this is a kind of
...ceremonies that we have during the time of time.* (Focus
Group #2 participant)

There are similar ceremonial rites of passage for the boy child as he transitions into
readiness for learning literature, culture, and religious scriptures. However, as one father
discussed forgoing some of these rituals and dress codes in relation to adaptation to
American culture,

*We have changed a little bit so we are existing in the
culture and custom of the U.S.* (Focus Group #2
participant)

In attempts to preserve some indigenous cultural aspects of parenting, one parent
explained the impact of cultural dress and some of her other cultural practices as isolating
and eroding her self-esteem in the early years of resettlement.

*You couldn’t fit in .. So you [are] no one ... you [are]
nobody. You can’t do anything and it’s like I experienced
very difficult different things through parenting [in
Vermont].* (Focus Group #2 participant)

These parents’ comments were consistent with Navas et al.’s (2007) findings of the
internal struggles that resettled immigrants face as they navigate the acculturation
strategies of integration, assimilation, and separation based on their ideology and values.

**Expectations in a Bicultural Context.** Along with several subthemes discussed
above emerging related to the key factor of expectations in a bicultural context (such as
dress code, rules, parental authority, supervision, independence, behavioral issues, power
differential, and teaching responsibility), the concept of hope also emerged within this factor. New American parents spoke about their hope for a future free from religious and ethnic discrimination. One mother from Somalia expressed her hope that,

_We’re one together. (Focus Group #1 participant)_

Another mother from Bosnia also stated,

...with my past experience, I don’t like any kind of separation. I just wish that we could all become kind of like culture but we, as you said, it’s hard. It’s hard. It’s hard. (Focus Group #2 participant)

While hopeful for a life free from religious and ethnic discrimination, this notion of hope also points to the internal turmoil and challenge of becoming one while simultaneously trying to protect one’s child from what may be seen as inappropriate American influence (e.g., social media).

Moreover, since educational opportunities, including for the girl child, were extremely limited in many of the participants’ homelands, parents spoke about their hopes for their children, at the very least, to complete an undergraduate education.

_To go to university (Focus Group #1 participant)_

With higher education opportunities in resettlement, parents were also hopeful that their children would be able to professionally advance further than them while also contributing to the family income.

_Some parents, we want to get our kids to go find good job and then working, and then give parents money. (Focus Group #4 participant)_

In addition to New Americans’ hopes for their children, they also described grappling with reaching out to support other (American-born) parents and seeking
support in a culture that seems to fiercely promote independence and privacy. Discussing childrearing in relation to support from neighbors, New American parents talked of feeling isolated from those around them due to attempts to maintain their cultural identify while wanting to be more integrated into the community. Parents expressed this challenge of navigating parenting in two different cultures.

“If a member of my [Bhutanese/Nepali] community is disrespectful or misbehaving or taking to some wrong deeds or wrong way, I’m very comfortable calling the parents and talking to them because we are all just like family you know family in the memory and we complement. And I want all the people in my [Vermont] community to let me know because I have kids and you know it’s obvious or it – at any time you know people might take wrong ways…[but] I don’t know how this is going to go in the future because we are slowly nudging ourselves…here [in Vermont] so we might in time, over time you know, learn to isolate ourselves, which is unfortunate … (Focus Group #2 participant)

Lastly, New American parents also spoke about miscommunications and misunderstandings as they navigate a bicultural life for themselves and their children. For example, a Bhutanese Nepali father said,

“One of our countrymen thought that kids are all the same [communal responsibility]. So he picked up a child …in the supermarket and tried to play with the child, and she [the mother] called the police and he got in trouble. So it is ok in our country. If you see a child and it’s all the same…But here, you know it’s a little different. (Focus Group #2 participant)

A Bosnian parent explained her own situation where she was forbidding her child from socializing with another child because the other child was involved with marijuana use.
He met in the school and told the social worker he’s not allowed to hang out with him [the other boy] because he’s an American....I don’t care for the race, for anything, you can be friends with anyone, but if the child is doing something that’s not allowed so he can’t be around. (Focus Group #2 participant)

Misunderstandings and assumptions based on previous cultural practice complicate the bicultural experience and can lead to very problematic situations and cultural divides.

**Further Investigation**

Four key factors influencing New American’s childrearing experience emerged across all four focus groups. These were family caregiving, parenting style, neighboring, and expectations in a bicultural context (see Figure 2). While these data began to address the research questions, further investigation was essential to deepen the data before answering the study specific questions. The phase II interview schedule emerged from unanswered questions generated from the phase I data analysis. For example, questions arose about what “family” means to New Americans and how parents have adapted their methods for teaching children respect, a critical family value identified by New Americans, in Vermont.

In considering the theme of parenting style, additional questions arose to deepen the understanding of New American parents’ values, beliefs and practices. Questions about how parents have maintained or adapted their parenting style in Vermont, including strategies they find helpful and what presents a hindrance were explored. Also of importance were some more conceptual questions about the meaning that New American parents attribute to home, safety, and healthy environments. Consideration of mitigating and complicating factors in raising children in safe, healthy environments also needed
further exploration in order to better understand Vermont’s New American parents’
perspectives and experiences.

Moreover, additional investigation of neighboring experiences and expectations
both in homelands and in Vermont were also essential for bridging cultural divides that
may be surfacing from disconnects between newly resettled parents and their American-
born counterparts. Questions to clarify expectations and assumptions about the role of
neighbors emerged from phase I data analysis. These questions also led to the need for
further investigation of expectations of parenting children in a bicultural environment.
Of specific interest was the manner in which parents manage differences in their
expectations of children’s behavior based on their culture of origin while their children’s
expectations now may be more grounded in American culture. The phase II interview
schedule (included in Appendix H) was developed to further investigate these
unanswered questions.

Phase II

The phase II study sample consisted of one group interview comprised of fourteen
Bhutanese Nepali parents (with one participant translating for the group when necessary)
and thirty-five individual interviews with English-proficient Bhutanese Nepali, Bosnian,
and Somali Bantu parents. Research participants ranged in age from thirty-five years and
younger to over forty-five years of age, with the average age of participants being in their
mid-late thirties to early forties. Just over half the participants were female, while nearly
all of the participants were married. More than three quarters of the study participants
were Bhutanese Nepali, with the other quarter of participants predominantly representing
Bosnian heritage. Of the length of time living in Vermont, only about one quarter of participants have lived in Vermont for six or more years. On the other hand, nearly half of the participants have resided in Vermont for three or fewer years.

In terms of living arrangements, more than a third of the parents had lived in joint families in their native countries or in the refugee camps, while in Vermont only about one quarter of the participants currently reside in joint (multigenerational, extended kin) families. In terms of familial support in the home to help with childrearing, more than a third of the participants had help from relatives in their homelands or refugee camps compared with less than a third having that same support in Vermont. However, nearly all of the research participants did respond that they live within walking distance to people from the same culture. Table IV presents research participants’ demographic data.

This phase of the dissertation study set out to further identify common parenting practices, beliefs, and values of New Americans and their perspectives of barriers and supports to both retention and adaptation of parenting practices in Vermont. A better understanding of Vermont’s New American community will enable further opportunities to bridge cultural divides and clarify misunderstandings among the Vermont community at large. Key findings obtained from the thirty-five interviews with Bhutanese Nepali, Bosnian, and Somali Bantu parents, along with the one focus group with Bhutanese Nepali parents (coded as Case #1), are presented
Table V: Phase II Demographic Data About Research Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>44.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Less than 34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35 to 44</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44.7</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45 or older</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marital status</td>
<td>Single</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Married</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>97.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who lives in the home</td>
<td>Other parent of my children</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>71.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparent(s)</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>26.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other relative(s)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who helps you raise your children</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>64.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparent(s)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other relative</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children being raised in Vermont</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>90.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 +</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of children raised in homeland</td>
<td>1-2</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>92.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 +</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who lived with you in your homeland</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparent(s)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>50.0</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other relative(s)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who helped you raise your children in your homeland</td>
<td>Spouse</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>28.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grandparent(s)</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>52.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other relative(s)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within walking distance to people of the same culture</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>90.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country of origin</td>
<td>Bhutan/Nepal</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bosnia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>14.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Somalia</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length of time living in Vermont</td>
<td>≤3 years</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>41.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4-6 years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 + years</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>29.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>17.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Other</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Five key findings emerged from this study in response to the research questions:

Question 1: What are the common parenting beliefs and practices that are characteristic of New Americans residing in Vermont?

Finding 1) Preserving cultural traditions and rituals, family caregiving, retention of native language, and volunteerism emerged as the most salient, shared parenting values of New Americans.

Question 2: How do New American parents view the challenges of parenting in a new cultural context?

Finding 2) Parents described challenges, which include preserving the values described above in the new environment, the changing family roles due to who has developed English proficiency, the shifting meaning of neighborhood for them, racial tensions between New Americans and long-time Vermont residents, and balancing a sense of collectivism and individualism with regard to communal responsibility for children.

Question 3: How have Vermont’s New American parenting beliefs and practices changed to adapt to the host culture?

Finding 3) New American parents seem to be transitioning from a more authoritarian approach to parenting to a more authoritative style, enjoying developing parent-child communication strategy of more interactive discussions than they were raised with or experienced in their homelands. However, New American parents report struggling with navigating adolescence when it comes to dating culture and concerns about peer
influence. Raising children bi-culturally adds a further dimension to the tension of parenting adolescents.

Question 4: How do retained childrearing beliefs, values, and practices help with adjustment in resettlement?

Finding 4) Retained practices and values of respect for elders, cultural traditions and rituals, and native language appear to help facilitate adjustment to the newly resettled environment while preserving a sense of identity and belonging.

Question 5: To what extent are New American parents comfortable with changes in their parenting approach in their resettled environment?

Finding 5) Despite the challenges with acculturation and New American parents’ concerns and disappointments with some loss of mother tongue and cultural traditions, mixed feelings about adaptation were less than expected. Parents generally seem satisfied with the shift in their parenting practices and approaches as they adjust to life in Vermont.

Along with phase II findings data presented in Table VI, a detailed discussion of each of the findings, including supporting data and explanation, is provided below.
Table VI: Phase II Findings Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding</th>
<th>Analytic Category</th>
<th>Relative Frequency</th>
<th>Frequency Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Preservation of Cultural Traditions and Rituals</td>
<td>27/29</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Family Caregiving (joint families, financial support)</td>
<td>22/29</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Language</td>
<td>15/29</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Volunteerism</td>
<td>11/29</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Collectivism/Individualism Balance</td>
<td>15/29</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shift to Authoritative Approach to Parenting</td>
<td>12/29</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Changing Family Roles (parental authority, who holds power in family)</td>
<td>12/29</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shifting Meaning of Neighborhood (expectations of neighbors)</td>
<td>7/29</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Racial Tensions, Discrimination and Harassment</td>
<td>5/34</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Bi-Culturalism/Conflict (e.g., dating, homework, social media expectations)</td>
<td>14/31</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Marriage Outside the Community</td>
<td>5/15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hesitant Support of Intercultural Marriage</td>
<td>7/15</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disapprove of Intercultural Marriage</td>
<td>5/15</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisfaction with Decision to Resettle in Vermont</td>
<td>23/29</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feelings of Powerlessness</td>
<td>3/9</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Respect for Elders (e.g., addressing by title, not challenging adult’s decision)</td>
<td>20/29</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cultural Traditions and Rituals</td>
<td>18/29</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Native Language</td>
<td>17/30</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Identity and Belonging</td>
<td>15/29</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Living at Home after 18 Years Old</td>
<td>11/30</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Parenting Satisfaction (e.g., with changing approach in the U.S)</td>
<td>13/29</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Safety (e.g., physical)</td>
<td>16/29</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Finding 1: The most salient shared parenting values of New American parents were the preservation of cultural traditions and rituals, family caregiving, the retention of native language, and volunteerism. Nearly all 3 of the interviewees (93%) stressed the importance of preserving indigenous cultural traditions and rituals while in Vermont.

*The cultures that we have in Nepal that we are practicing, guiding children, keeping children in the house... So we continue because in society the children are not allowed to speak the vulgar language, the bad language are not allowed in front of parents, in front of elders in front of relatives. If they speak they will be neglected, so it’s not good. So we don’t allow that one. That is very important. We love the elders ... and we have to respect them too. The most important for us. (#12, Bhutanese Nepali Father)*

*Have them to understand which part of country which ethnic we are and all the culture of our own culture and our tradition even when we celebrate festival, we have our own festival and even local festivals like them to know involve this very well and have them good education. (#15, Bhutanese Nepali Father)*

These rituals and cultural traditions were most commonly discussed among the Bhutanese Nepali parents and included festival celebrations (e.g., Diwali), practicing Hinduism and Buddhism (although some of this practice is challenging because the nearest temples are in Montreal, Quebec or Albany, NY), ceremonies to mark developmental milestones and rites of passage (e.g., son’s first haircut, Upanayana- boy’s threading ceremony which symbolizes the boy’s transition into adulthood, marriages), and, as one parent spoke about, the use of healers concurrently with Western medicine.

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3 The structure for presenting quantification of data in narrative form follows Bloomberg & Volpe’s (2012) suggestions. For example, 95% of respondents are considered an “overwhelming majority;” a majority is represented by more than 50%; between 20-30% of respondents would be classified as “some;” and 5-15% are “a few.”
We have a kind of a belief so we depend on both. (#18, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

For the Bosnian parents, following some of the tenets of Islam is important, but they describe being far less focused on the multitude of rituals. Three quarters (75%) of all of the participants discussed wanting to follow Muslim teachings and celebrate major holidays with their children.

... I try to learn him about our religion, what he is supposed to do, what he need to do and everything... (#14, Bosnian Mother)

As with the preliminary phase of the study, family caregiving was also a critical value of New American parents in this second phase. Family caregiving can model family values for children and provide some additional parenting support particularly in joint families. Conversely, it can also place competing demands on parents and impact parenting through the stress and strain of dual caregiving responsibilities (to one’s children and one’s extended family). A majority of parents interviewed (76%) discussed the importance of caring for extended family both here in the States as well as back in their homelands. The Bhutanese Nepali parents, for example, discussed their value of living in joint families and the responsibilities of caring for their elderly parents.

Basically, the way that I was grown up, first when kids are given birth by adult parents they...take care of the kids and when they are totally grown up the parents are getting older then the kids take over the care. So this is the way we are grown up in our culture (#9, Bhutanese Nepali Father).

I have like joint family. Thing is like youngest one has to be with parents, and here I cannot imagine that if I live separate my dad he does not know how to speak English, my mom does not know how to speak English, even they do
not know how to pay a bill also. They don’t know where that is. So I have to, there is no way, I just have to, if I take some other senior center or wherever, there also, they are used to our food, they are not going to eat anything and they don’t know how to talk and so you know I mean, it is like challenging situation for us, so I have like joint family system. (#13, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Like some of the Bhutanese Nepali parents, other parents added to the family caregiving discussion by sharing their sense of responsibility for emotionally and financially supporting relatives in the States as well as in their homelands.

We try to help as much as we can. Possibly our parents and after if we can help like sister in law and brother in law and rest of family. For us its priority parents. We send and support them money. If they don’t have support from us you know I don’t know how they gonna survive really. (#14, Bosnian Mother)

He did, he used to give, when he start earning money, he give money to his parents. Me too, I support my sisters and brother, and I support my parents...If you find that they are economically weak, if you find they are economically weak, we support them to grow. Because we are a socialized way of thinking. Everybody in the family, when they are in problem we try to shoulder, so when I was only in Nepal and my parents and brothers and sisters were not working they were in the refugee camp, I was out of the refugee camp and I started, in Kathmandu and I started earning in Kathmandu. I used to educate the children of my brothers... I didn’t ask for a refund, I don’t ask for refund, and I nonrefundable, I give money to educate their children, to look for my parents, everything, food, clothing, medication, everything. Also, when they’re in need of medication like money, I had to supply them money. So many things. I feel that it is my responsibility. Being educated in your family, and to look up to the person who are in need of my help, I feel that it is my responsibility, like, people in US, they think about their voting responsibility. (#28 Bhutanese Nepali Mother and Father)

More than half the participants (52%) also cited the importance of retaining their
mother tongue and teaching it to their children.

*All the time we are speaking our language in the home. I want to preserve that, at least I want to teach it.* (#27, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Some parents also spoke about the challenge of language retention while raising a bicultural child. They expressed concerns that the effort to ensure that their children feel comfortable and fit in at school may lead children to lose their mother tongue.

...it’s that battle between, I really want my kids to talk our language and be able to understand what they are talking especially our in-laws are helping a lot, they are helping us to raise our kids. Now with him starting kindergarten, that could [be] one of their challenges because I want him to continue talking our language, but also I want him to feel comfortable when he goes to school. He speaks both languages but I guess as a parent that is one of the things I feel like it is challenging. (#4, Bosnian Mother)

Lastly, some parents (38%) discussed their value and practice of volunteerism and its importance in terms of their giving back to the community and modeling this value for their children.

*I don’t know about other [non-Bosnian] people, the way I was raised, volunteering work is very important. When I was in Bosnia especially after war, we had lots of people that I need to find the word for that, they were forced to be homeless because of being a different religions, they were Muslim or Catholic they were thrown out from their homes and then some of them had you know a chance to stay with friends or families or in mixed marriages like my mom. So while... over there I was a member of it’s like a free aid, legal aid, so I was helping other people return to their homes so everything was on a volunteering basis. So you try your best, and there was also a food shelf, and I was involved in that. Although you are going through bad things, but there are people who need more.*
Then whenever there is an event, especially through my employer, my older son will help me. We did COTS walk this summer, and we are going to the Breast Cancer walk. Then there is the Special Olympics, there is always something that we try to [do], you know through the United Way, you know to help with something as much as possible. It’s not a lot but you know at least some effort for those people who need help. (#4, Bosnian Mother)

Finding 2: New American parents described the most challenging aspects of parenting in the new cultural context to include striving to preserve the values identified above (93%), shifting from a more authoritarian to a more authoritative style of parenting (41%), and navigating the challenges of living in Vermont. Parents described these specific challenges, which include the changing family roles due to who has developed English proficiency (31%), the shifting meaning of neighborhood for them (24%), balancing a sense of collectivism and individualism with regard to communal responsibility for children (52%), and racial and ethnic tensions between New Americans and long-time Vermont residents (15%).

As parents described the importance of retaining cultural traditions and rituals, so did they acknowledge their continued practice of maintaining their culture.

We don’t lose our... people. I don’t want to lose that culture. And we always be like a nice [to] parents and old people, and we always practice our culture our festival and I don’t lose them. We have to always celebrate our festival and what is important about that festival and I do like I always teach my childrens and we always pray the G-d I teach my son, I don’t want to lose. (#10, Bhutanese Nepali Mother)

As important as it is for parents to maintain and transmit their culture to their children, they are faced with acculturation dilemmas. For example, the Bosnian parents in
particular (83%) discussed their surprise and ambivalence with children being invited for sleepovers at their American friends’ homes. In their culture, they explained, children always slept in the family home. Parents were concerned about the influence that sleepovers would have on their children and how it would detract from their family values. Rarely, if at all, were children permitted to sleep at a friends’ home.

And when you’re letting them go to those sleepovers or this hanging out after school every single day, the child will just lose the circle of the family – what the family means. It will be all about what’s happening in somebody’s house and how they living their lifes in somebody’s house, and they want to bring that in my house, and I don’t want that. (#29, Bosnian Mother)

While perhaps reluctant to assimilate into American culture in some aspects, 41% of New American parents interviewed described shifting from a rather authoritarian style of parenting to a more authoritative approach. They discussed their observations of how American-born parents talk with their children and explain decisions, answer children’s questions, provide choices, and generally include children in some family decision-making processes. They said they wanted to incorporate this practice into their repertoire.

[I learned it’s important]...talking to your kids. Having that open relationship. (#35, Bosnian Mother)

Some of the things that [I] have been learning, the way that personally myself and my family friends and relatives parenting their kids would be different back in Nepal and Bhutan and a few things I have learned the way the practices here as a real parent for their kids...So, the way that kids prefer to do and most of the things they like to do has to be given the opportunity to do their own, are just new to me. Like back in places where I was they need real guidance, like some of the activities they like to do it where they come from they tell them not to do it but here it is their
[the children’s] choice and we have to understand it is their choice. (#9, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

As New Americans find their parenting style shifting, some parents (31%) also described the roles within the family changing in resettlement. Consistent with the findings from the earlier phase of this study, parents explained that there is a power shift within the family as the children master English and navigate the bi-cultural living experience more rapidly than their parents.

Since the parents don’t know the language – language is the main dynamic tool that is really transferring the power dynamics within our families. The sons and daughters that are going to high schools or colleges are becoming the leaders of our families. (#2, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Parents also explained some of their approaches to managing such tensions with the changing roles. For example,

There is a, in general, if you talk in general in our community, it is a case of every community, definitely a family dynamic is going on... Our younger generation they have an American education, an American way of life, they want to practice that and see that, they think it’s very normal for them. So, basically that is going on in every community. That dynamic my personal way of dealing with that is to educate ourselves. Not to let children be the guardian of the house but we are ourselves it, because children learn how to speak in English, they know how to use the computers now, and use technology but parents don’t. They have become kind of like the main person of the house, so they make a lot of decisions, the decision makers of the house, and a lot of parents are not happy with that because you know children’s decisions, and they don’t just follow the directions of the parents and don’t really obey what they say. So in order to have a control over the family, in a family, my personal take it that I have to be constantly upgrading myself in terms like using the computer and like exposure to the, what is going on around, and constantly
gazing out of, to see what is the best... (#5, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Additionally, for the Muslim Somali Bantu families, the fathers or husbands are traditionally the heads of the household. However, this dynamic is also changing as women in resettled communities are beginning to make family decisions.

_Dad is leader in the house. But now women are claiming some decisions...sometimes you know since after ten years some women they change and they want to do their own decision... (#30, Somali Bantu Mother)_

Along with the shifting power differential, some parents also spoke about the shift in their experience of neighboring. Prior to resettlement, neighboring took a more integral role in childrearing. All parents discussed the meaning of neighbor in their cultures. Across all participants, the role of the neighbor was described similarly to extended kin, in that neighbors could be relied on for emergencies, for assistance with childcare and supervision of the community’s children, sharing food or tea and coffee, and intimate friendships. Each of these elements of neighboring contributed to parents’ social support systems to assist with raising children and building stronger communities. However, 24% spoke specifically to the shift in their experience of neighboring in resettlement. For example, the Bhutanese Nepali culture is more agrarian and more of a collectivist society than is Vermont. Therefore, Bhutanese Nepali culture tends to foster more interdependent relationships among neighbors as they depend on one another for help with farming and in emergencies. Grieving the loss of the intimacy with neighbors has been painful and lonely for some participants.

...they [neighbors in Bhutan and Nepal] are interactive. Help each other. Never complain anything else. And be
always supportive, cooperative and collaborative with everything they do. Its – it’s like a machine you know, connection of – its like a car machine which has different parts of like equipments that are joined together to make a machine. So that is a kind of – we know each other. We know how many families that there are. We know who are sick right next door and we seek the help. We shout for any kind of emergencies, you know, and then we think to help you know. But the thing is we try to give things to others, since we come from agricultural background, so we grow a lot of agriculture products so if you happen to get things – so we knock the door and “Here it is. You can have it” you know, and there are a lot of sharing. Neighbor means sharing. Sharing love, respect, and then like giving, sharing the things you know. But that is missing here. I’m missing that part... I don’t feel it [the neighborhood is] very lively. I feel myself as a machine going for a walk and coming back and spending the years just...there is no liveliness. There is no humanness...because no one knows each other (#2, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Yeah we wish that we expect the same thing that it was in Nepal. What I think here is that we live in a close neighborhood and we don’t find out community members close by, maybe one or two apartment here and some are there and some are very far place. Most of the time we live inside our apartment. In Nepal we used to just go around to teach others place and talk to each other, but not here. You stay inside your apartment and when you need something you go get into car and go outside so we don’t find much of people... (#18, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

As their experiences with neighbors shifted in resettlement, New American parents (52%) explained the concurrent shift from collectivist to more individualistic childrearing practices in Vermont. Exemplified by one Bhutanese Nepali father’s summation of the cultural difference between his Nepali perspective and the American perspective,

*We grew up in a culture where even if I wanted to represent myself, I say “we.” ...It is not our culture, it’s not a good*
Parents also grappled with their expectations and experiences from their homelands of collectively taking responsibility for children.

_In the camp, neighbors are like your everything like you know they are like childcare, wouldn’t have to pay them money. They can help us every time. We take care of their child too. They don’t ask for money. It’s also about we have good love each other about the neighbors. For here its, neighbors don’t take care of any child you know, if they do they ask for money. This is very difficult. In Nepal they like the neighbors, even if I take care of their child I treat them like our child, here it’s very hard._ (#15, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

_Everything I think it happens, here everybody is independent. They can survive themselves. We don’t depend on others. Neighbor does not depend on me and we don’t depend, I think it’s because of God, but in Nepal or Bhutan we should depend on neighbor._ (#22, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

...everyone knows every children so if someone is going somewhere, if anybody sees them they can [guide them home]...And if we somebody is going somewhere we can bring them back. Here we have to do all by ourselves. When neighbor we go out, we have to always be alert to worst thing. (#25, Bhutanese Nepali Mother)

And I think everyone had more time and more desire to be around each other [in Bosnia]. And it’s like I know the kids are raised by the community and neighborhood, not by parents. (#3, Bosnian Mother)

Yet in Vermont, navigating the more individualistic culture of childrearing can be puzzling.
It is a kind of practice that is here, that whatever one does do not care for that, just walk away. (#18, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

I feel it sometimes like “Should I go? What is their culture? Should I go and ask them to give a place there?” and then I feel on other side, “What does the law say if I give the kids here and then if the parents again blame then what would happen?” (#2, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Lastly, 15% of New American parents also described racial tensions as they explained some of their challenges with raising children in Vermont. Parents have experienced discrimination and are concerned about its impact on children. They spoke about their value of respecting people from all cultures and seeking resettlement in Vermont in order to protect their children from the discrimination, oppression, and abuse that they faced in their homelands. For example, 100% of Somali Bantu parents and 13% of Bhutanese Nepali parents shared experiences of being harassed and maltreated by unwelcoming neighbors in their resettled communities.

The hate didn’t just stay in their house or just around here, it went all through, over to my cars. They [neighbors] were putting them, alcohol that they shot on top of my car and then them opening their private parts and spilling pee on my car. I’ve seen all that. We have toilets, we have bathrooms, why on my car? That is a very big hate. When I looked for help, I got the help that I needed, but when I seek for that help, the hate became even worse, until I reported many times, many times, they moved away from here. But what I see, I could just go and wash that pee, it’s not that much of a deal for me, but what I see is that you know, you are not feeling good about me in your heart. You bring all this outside. Telling me, you know, go back to your country, no one needs you here, something like that… So that guy showed me a lot of hatred towards other people…(Case #36, Somali Bantu Mother)
Finding 3: As New American parents adapt to Vermont culture, nearly half of them seem to be transitioning from a more authoritarian parenting approach to one that is more authoritative in style, enjoying developing a parent-child communication strategy of more interactive discussions than they were raised with or experienced in their homelands (41%). Parents stressed their desire for more open communication with their children, along with employing a more democratic style of family decision-making. For example, parents spoke about the taboo of discussing sexual development in their native cultures and how they are striving to adapt to more of an American style of communicating.

[In Bosnia, my mother never spoke with me about menstruation]...Having that open relationship [with my daughter] and talking to your kids. (#35, Bosnian Mother)

Parents also noted their observation of American-style authoritative parenting that they would like to incorporate into their repertoire.

...the American people, they really explain how this cause and what happens, who said that...I am trying to do that for my family and my son (#15, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Along with shifting parenting styles, participants did identify that raising children bi-culturally adds a further dimension to the tension of parenting adolescents. Forty-five percent (45%) of New American parents spoke about the strains of raising children bi-culturally. While most parents (80%) spoke about their decision to resettle in Vermont and accept the culture of their new communities, 33% of parents specifically spoke about their feelings of powerlessness when it comes to navigating the bi-cultural expectations of their children. For example,
If he [my son] listen to me, in that suggestion, if he listen to me, I am happy I have no problems. But if he does not listen to me then he can do himself because here everything is free, everything is free. He can decide what is good and what is bad and if he does not listen...Nothing to do...I try to advise him. I cannot do anything, I just try. I try to advise him, sorry, I believe you, you cannot do that, I try to advise him...if he does not understand [at 18], listen to us, I don’t know what we can do. (#16, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

However, many New American parents (45%) also reported struggling with navigating adolescence when it comes to dating culture and concerns about peer influence. For example, a Somali Bantu mother (#36) spoke about her culture’s taboo of premarital sexual relationships. She explained that if an adolescent daughter feels ready for a sexual relationship, then she is encouraged to marry early rather than date in a non-committed relationship (as is perceived to be the practice of her American counterpart). Similarly, of the parents specifically asked about marriage outside of their ethnic community, 33% reported not wanting their children to marry outside the community. However, 47% of parents hesitantly said that they would support their children marrying outside the community because they felt that they were now living in this culture and need to accept their children’s assimilation.

My plan is, if there is the same caste it’s nice but nowadays their choice [#18, Bhutanese Nepali Mother] Our opinion, our plan doesn’t match children future what they do, what they will be doing. We have kind of let’s say plan of getting married with a community member but I don’t think...It is how it is here, And we are here, we are not in Nepal or Bhutan, so we have to assent to what is here...[#19, Bhutanese Nepali Father]
Finding 4: Retained practices and values of respect for elders (69%), cultural traditions and rituals (62%), native language (57%), and volunteerism (38%) appear to help facilitate adjustment to the newly resettled environment while preserving a sense of identity and belonging (52%). The majority of New American parents (69%) stressed the importance of respecting elders and retaining that practice while raising their children in Vermont. A Bhutanese Nepali father explained that in his mother tongue, there are different words to designate or address the stature of different members of the family and community (this is also somewhat similar to the Bosnian language).

Sometimes the parents make them follow the rules so they are respectful...
If we see them do Namaste “do Namaste to mama or uncle” we tell them and [in] English we have only one kind of word human to adult to younger to anybody but in Nepali we have different terms for you for everything. [There are specific words to designate]...means low level language, small kids, same age with respect for language. [Another term]... means usually use for stranger or parents or elder people... So it depends on how they give respect. We teach them how to follow. But in English we have only one tongue. (#22, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

In addition to the use of specific titles to demonstrate respect for elders, a Bosnian mother explained that in Bosnian culture,

A healthy society is based on a healthy family...we raised kids to be respectful, helpful. (#7, Bosnian Mother)

The majority of New American parents (62%) also stressed the importance of maintaining cultural rituals and traditions. For example, celebrating festivals such as Diwali and Eid, haircutting ceremonies, and rituals for celebrations of birth, marriage, and death were all important to retain in resettlement.
First ...[priority] is our culture and tradition and our special belief. Yeah, it has to have every, even sorry, even every parents who came from abroad they have their own language, we have to preserve that and our cultures we have our own customs we have to preserve and teach them what is, you know what your father used to do you know, when we passed away, we teach them, what his grandfather used to do. Every parents have to have this to teach about our own culture. (#15, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Nepali culture is important. To follow that...follow the parents, grandparents, great grandparents....We have to celebrate it. (#16 & 17, Bhutanese Nepali Mother and Father)

Many parents (37%) also spoke about the importance of children remaining at home until marriage or, at the very least, until after higher education is completed and the adult child can be financially independent.

...when he becomes an adult, you know, I prefer him to be like me, what I’m doing. Living with us and I want to give him good education. I don’t want him to live separate like American they do like after 18 years they have one apartment and they pay the rent themselves, which in the one part is good, but being in our own culture and tradition separately for the balance per my culture where I came from, I don’t want to say that American people when the kids grow up operating do themselves, like them, I don’t want to say they don’t have a good love towards the children, but I prefer like what I am. (#15, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

I was living my parents ‘til I got married and that’s totally fine. And I’m telling my son, you don’t really need to look to move somewhere. Live with me and my husband, with us. You’ll have free food, free living, free everything. Go to school. Educate yourself. Once, when you really emotionally and physically ready to move out then you make decision and move out. (#29, Bosnian Mother)
Coupled with the importance of maintaining cultural traditions and rituals, including showing respect for one’s elders and remaining at home until marriage, the majority of New American parents (57%) also stressed the importance of preserving language to better facilitate communication, but also particularly their identity and belonging within their community in resettlement.

...and to connect with the community they have to practice that. And they have to speak the language. So the community member will know he or she is from our community, she speaks this language. (#20, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Moreover, the value of volunteerism resurfaced as a way for parents to connect with community and integrate some of their collectivist culture with childrearing in Vermont.

...for many years, I volunteered case management for newcomers. New refugees and volunteered to help them settle and manage their life and connect them with different resources and try to kind of like have a better start... better off. And we did a lot of stuff... it’s kind of like became a part of [you], it’s in your bloodstream. It’s in you trying to make sure we don’t want anybody go through stuff like we have experienced in general so... we’ve been there in those shoes and its really painful so we want to be there for others...

[Also] I was involved in gardening with kids... what I’ve been involved [with] was all about kids because especially now when I feel like my kids are grown up and I – I can say that they’re on a good path. So I still feel young and you know upbeat and I feel I can offer my help to the kids that they might lacking the love and care so I want to be part of their childhood, and especially the refugee kids, and American of course I do have many, many kids that I kind of like try to be there for them if they seek help. (#3, Bosnian Mother)
Finally, a Bhutanese Nepali father summed up the depth of his connection to his community through his volunteerism.

> I have been doing this community service as volunteer. I am here always as a volunteer. How to build a community... It’s all about your heart... I came here with my entire heart to support the needy people ... (#15, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

**Finding 5:** Despite the challenges with acculturation and concerns and disappointments with some loss of mother tongue and cultural traditions, nearly half the parents (45%) reported feeling satisfied with the shift in their parenting practices and their adjustment to life in Vermont. As with previously mentioned results, parents reiterated their concerns with their culture and language fading in the next generation particularly in relation to their discussion of their adjustment to life in Vermont.

> ...the only concern we have now is the Nepali culture and the Nepali language. Otherwise we are very satisfied here, we are just scared, worried they might lose their Nepali culture or the adapting to the Nepali culture and like airing out the Nepali culture and the Nepali language. (#5, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

One father shared his observations of some American-style parenting that he has taken some pride in as he has begun to incorporate this into his parenting repertoire,

> ...when children they don’t obey with just some yell them, or some parents just pat them also, I think American society when like time ... time off [use of time out strategy]... They have certain kinds of jobs at home [chores], like children...Sometimes some children don’t do anything but some working hard, but they have like some type of chores... (#22, Bhutanese Nepali Father)
For parents who have had to flee their homelands with their families, the basic human need for safety is ever-present on their minds, perhaps even more so than for their American-born counterparts. Diminishing threats and enhanced safety influences family well-being and subsequently, parents’ emotional availability to their children (Lyubomirsky & Boehm, 2010). Feelings of safety were also mentioned by the majority of parents (55%) as contributing to their sense of satisfaction with adjusting to life in Vermont. For example,

Yeah it is hard to explain, but being forcefully evicted person from the homeland. Motherland. It is very hard to express the internal trauma, but used to be in the camps...personally we had a chance to come to the US and we are here in the land of opportunity, but when we think of back home because my daughter was born in the refugee camp and we had a very hard time to raise her though she was three years old, but that was very hard to raise her even though she was three years old. So we feel that we were very unsecure at that time. There was no facility, no medical facility, no good meal, no house, and we spent 20 years in a plastic tent, under a plastic tent, it was a critical situation for us, but when we came to the U.S., we were protected by everybody, number one, and late on, somehow, we became homeowner, we own this house. So it was good for them. Before they were asking, uh is there any way to buy our own house. Meaning um they were unsecure because they were in a different apartment, comes and goes... they were not secure when we stay at that apartment complex. Now that is it, this local environment, neighborhood is very cooperative so they go outside, and having our own place to stay is one of the safety things for us. (#20, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Given the trauma that parents have experienced that led to their resettlement in Vermont, as one parent affirmed her decision to build her new life in Vermont,
We are ok really, we are good and we are glad that we came here and for everything. (#14, Bosnian Mother)

Finally, as another parents stated,

The number one thing is to raise our children safe and healthy is the system of the state. Number one. The legal system is very safe and the, they are getting a good education. Education wise they are in a good place. Healthy wise they are in a good place. So environmentally we love the environment of Vermont, which is good. (#20, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

However, despite the majority of parents feeling safe and this contributing to a sense of satisfaction with adjusting to life in Vermont, a few parents (15%) relayed experiences of being victimized by racial discrimination and feeling unsafe.

The hate didn’t just stay in their house or just around here, it went all through, over to my cars. They were putting them, alcohol that they shot on top of my car and then them opening their private parts and spilling pee on my car. I’ve seen all that. We have toilets. We have bathrooms, why on my car? That is a very big hate. When I looked for help, I got the help that I needed, but when I seek for that help, the hate became even worse, until I reported many times, many times, they moved away from here. But what I see, I could just go and wash that pee, it’s not that much of a deal for me, but what I see is that you know, you are not feeling good about me in your heart. You bring all this outside. Telling me, you know, go back to your country, no one needs you here, something like that. I read some history about the United States. I know about the United States, no one belongs here. I know that. So why are you telling me this. They consider me as someone who is not educated. They consider me as someone who is ... just here for nothing. So that guy showed me a lot of hatred towards other people... (#36, Somali Bantu Mother)
One family was able to relocate to another part of the city, while two other families mentioned awaiting Section 8 housing vouchers so that they may relocate to a different location within the county.

**Serendipitous Findings**

Two serendipitous findings emerged from the data. A few parents (10%) described the influence of their refugee migration trauma histories on childrearing in resettlement in Vermont. Navigating the memories of war and persecution while also trying to be present and emotionally available for their children can be challenging.

*We were* ...a lot under stress when we get there... stress or sometimes I yell, Leave me alone I want to finish, you have to wait I am going to... You know that is a moment, Oh my god, I should do different I should handle different with my son because he was under stress [too], yeah that has happened to me. (#14, Bosnian Mother)

Some parents also spoke about how their trauma histories help them prepare their children for the future. One mother explained that one day, when she believes that her children are old enough, she will educate her children about her experiences during the civil war.

*The world is kind of open to any disaster or anything so we can’t say we are in American we won’t see any difficulties, so I want them to be ready for everything. I want them to be equipped with any kind of knowledge that may come through life then be prepared for that.* (#36, Somali Bantu Mother)

Another finding that emerged was that perhaps a significant number of Bhutanese Nepali community members aged 50 and over struggle with depression in relation to
social adjustment in Vermont. As least one Bhutanese Nepali elder (community leader) who participated in the study raised concerns about the mental health welfare of Bhutanese Nepali seniors in resettlement in Vermont.

But it is like 50 and above, all of them, don’t have access to languages and they don’t have jobs and these are the situation where they have got …[idle] time... the saying goes like, idle mind is the devils work is exactly what is happening… and those things are related to their daily life and I don’t know how long they are going to live, and maybe 5% of their life is left to go through and so this has brought a big challenge that is how they tell me...The suicide cases has risen as compared to other communities as the greatest in Bhutanese communities. The suicide rate is the highest in the US in the Bhutanese community. (case #9, Bhutanese Nepali Father)

Chapter Summary

Five key findings were revealed in phase II of this study. They were organized in relation to the research questions and their guiding issues. Data from individual interviews and one group interview revealed research participants’ perceptions of their experiences with retention and adaptation of their childrearing practices in Vermont. As is the practice with qualitative research, extensive quotations from participants were used to illustrate the findings and provide an accurate representation of participants’ narratives.

The primary finding addressed the first research question by identifying the preservation of cultural traditions and rituals (93%), family caregiving (75%), retention of native language (52%), and volunteerism (38%) as the most commonly shared parenting values of New Americans. Emanating from participants’ descriptions of their
parenting beliefs and practices, this finding illustrated the values held most dear to New American parents. In discussing why these values were held so prominently, most parents explained that these values were instilled in them in their homelands (via culture and religion).

The second finding was that nearly all New American parents (93%) strive to preserve the values mentioned above, as well as the value of volunteerism (38%). They spoke about shifting their parenting style from authoritarian to more of an authoritative style (41%) while they navigate changing roles and their understanding of their new communities. Some participants discussed the isolation and disappointment that they feel as they adjust their parenting to a more individualistic culture compared with that of their native country.

The third finding further examined the change in parenting approach from authoritarian to more parent-child interactive discussion and decision-making and the tensions of raising bi-cultural children (45%). Despite the general satisfaction with the decision to resettle in Vermont (80%), some parents (20%) described feelings of powerlessness and loss of control over their children as they raise them bi-culturally. Also indicative of the grappling with raising children bi-culturally were the discussions about marrying outside of ethnic communities. Almost half of parents (47%) support intercultural marriage, albeit many did so hesitantly, while 33% were not in support of intercultural marriage.
The fourth finding identified the majority of specifically retained practices and values of respect for elders, cultural traditions and rituals, native language, and volunteerism which seem to also help facilitate adjustment to the newly resettled environment while preserving a sense of identity and belonging (51%). Parents spoke extensively about adhering to these practices in order to keep children connected to their ethnic communities and give them a sense of identity and belonging. Along with preserving their connections to their communities of origin, many parents (37%) also discussed their intention of retaining the tradition of children living at home at least until marriage or financial independence.

The fifth finding illuminated nearly half the participating parents’ (45%) satisfaction with their shifting parenting practices and their adjustment to parenting in Vermont. Parents spoke about learning new parenting strategies and their feelings of safety (55%) in relation to raising their children in Vermont, while a few parents (15%) shared stories of discrimination and harassment.

The five key findings described above responded to the research questions posed in this study. Through culturally or religiously instilled values in their homelands, New American parents continue to strive to maintain some prominently shared parenting values once resettled in Vermont. However, New American parents also grapple with the challenges of raising their children bi-culturally in Vermont. Parenting styles appear to be rapidly transforming from authoritarian to more of an authoritative approach as parents adapt to the host culture. Some specifically retained childrearing practices and values seem to also facilitate New Americans’ social adjustment in Vermont. Finally, the
findings suggest that participants were generally satisfied with their decision to resettle and raise their families in Vermont.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study highlighted in the preceding chapter were organized into categories and presented in such a way so as to provide a coherent narrative. In this chapter, interpretive insights into the findings will be presented. Building on the previous chapter’s presentation of separated and chunked pieces of data to provide a narrative of the research, this chapter’s purpose now is to synthesize the analysis and present a more integrated explanation. The implications of these findings raise awareness and deepen understanding of New Americans’ perspectives on childrearing practices that are retained and which ones they have adapted in Vermont. A summary of the interpretation of the findings, including limitations of this study, is also provided. Finally, the chapter concludes with a call for further research and recommendations for community development.

The study was based on the following five research questions and guiding issues:

1) What are the common parenting beliefs and practices that are characteristic of New Americans residing in Vermont?

   Guiding issue: The literature suggests that New Americans’ will identify strongly held values of interdependent childrearing, filiality coupled with respect for elders, and an authoritarian approach to parenting will be offered.

2) How do New American parents view the challenges of parenting in a new cultural context?

   Guiding issue: Research suggests that preserving some cultural and religious traditions may be helpful in mediating social adjustment in the newly resettled state.
Both informal and formal organizing communities for various ethnic subgroups may also help with preserving some cultural and/or religious traditions, social adjustment, resources, and the like.

3) How have Vermont’s New American parenting beliefs and practices changed to adapt to the host culture?

Guiding issue: The literature indicates that there are particular beliefs and practices that parents would like to retain but find incompatible with US/Vermont culture such that it may cause tension for families.

4) How do retained childrearing beliefs, values and practices influence adjustment in resettlement?

Guiding issue: Retained practices may affect a sense of belonging to the community without having to relinquish one’s previous identity in order to acculturate.

5) To what extent are New American parents comfortable with changes in their parenting approach in their resettled environment?

Guiding issue: Research implies that mixed feelings about adaptation are expected as parents may be grieving the loss of some customs while embracing others.

New American parents face a series of challenges raising children in host communities. They bring with them a variety of parenting practices, values, and beliefs. This research has focused on how these aspects of their native cultures have been adapted to parenting in Vermont.

The first research question sought to identify the common parenting beliefs and practices that are characteristic of New Americans residing in Vermont. Grounded in the literature presented in Chapter 2, it was anticipated that interdependent childrearing,
filiality coupled with respect for elders, and an authoritarian approach to parenting would be the common core beliefs and practices of New Americans living in Vermont. Previous research pointed out the correlation between interdependent cultures and an authoritarian parenting style. Research highlighted the “higher levels of control” that parents from collectivist cultures exert over their children, along with their emphasis on obedience and more restraint during feeding and social play than their counterparts from individualistic cultures (Rudy & Grusec, 2006, p.68). Yet, the absence of interdependent childrearing as a core value of parenting in Finding 1 suggests that New American parents have assimilated to more individualistic approaches to childrearing. This may be attributed to parents’ shared perspectives that in Vermont, unlike in their homelands, there is a lack of meaningful, trusting relationships with their neighbors. New Americans do not have the kind of relationships with their neighbors that enable a more collectivist sense of responsibility for the community’s children.

Additionally, another possible contributing factor to the absence of interdependent childrearing practice could be that, prior to arrival, New Americans are provided with a cultural orientation to an American (individualistic) parenting approach through their orientation class. This orientation may influence New Americans such that they are reluctant to take responsibility for non-related children because they are unsure of how that would be received by American-born parents. Therefore, in Vermont, neighbors do not take on the role of extended kin nor share responsibility in raising the community’s children.
Consistent with the literature on filiality and extending the construct to family caregiving (as explained in the conceptual framework established in phase I of this study), study participants also valued family caregiving. Family caregiving retains some of the collectivist values of New Americans from their cultures of origin. As Schwartz et al. (2010) also argued, this enables parents to benefit from their social connections and contribute to their social support system, while also holding them accountable to their family and motivating them to be successful.

Although the literature discussed the concerns of acculturation and losing family caregiving aspects of native culture in resettlement, respect for elders emerged as a subtheme of family caregiving. Finding 1 highlighted respect for elders as a critical value of family caregiving and related to cultural retention. Unlike the rapid erosion upon resettlement reported in the literature (Lee, 2007), respect was viewed as a valued expectation of New Americans and essential for parents to continue to pass on this value and expectation to their children.

Contrary to the expectation that parents would value an authoritarian approach to parenting, Finding 1 suggests that there is actually a rapid shift to more of an authoritative style. With 70% of participants living in Vermont for less than five years, it was surprising to find that parents have shifted their approach to more of an authoritative style. It was assumed that the acculturation process in this area would happen over a lengthier time frame (for example, as the next generation becomes parents). This may be attributed to two possibilities. First, most participants were young parents and birthed the
majority of their children in Vermont. Therefore, they may have been taking their parenting cues from what they observed in Vermont rather than in their homelands.

Second, cultural orientation for New Americans stresses that corporal punishment is unacceptable in the U.S. Therefore, this may have opened the door to exploring less authoritarian approaches to childrearing as New Americans have needed to seek out alternative disciplining approaches since they can no longer resort to corporal punishment. Additionally, some parents did not have their own parents (who likely practiced an authoritarian style of parenting) nearby to advise them on parenting.

The extent to which New American parents valued the importance of preserving cultural traditions, rituals, and native languages were additional findings that were not anticipated. Given that the phase II participants were all parents who had fled their homelands because of persecution, discrimination, and some threat of genocide due to their minority status at a particular time, it seemed somewhat surprising that 93% of the parents stressed the importance of preservation of culture. Rather than hide their culture and try to blend in, parents chose to embrace their identity. One possible explanation may be that it is extremely difficult for a minority person to “blend in” in Vermont because the state is a primarily homogeneous, Caucasian, and English-speaking only. However, another possible explanation is that embracing one’s cultural identity and preserving traditions and language serves to reinforce that the oppressors of their homelands have failed to annihilate them.

The second research question examined how New American parents view the challenges of parenting in a new cultural context. It was anticipated that both informal
and formal organizing of communities for various ethnic subgroups serve as mediating factors because they help with preserving some cultural and religious traditions, social adjustment, resources, and the like. Finding 2 identified the parenting challenges. These included the changing family roles due to who has developed English proficiency, the evolving meaning of neighborhood for New Americans, racial tensions between New Americans and long-time Vermont residents, balancing a sense of collectivism and individualism with regard to communal responsibility for children, and volunteerism to contribute to community.

For the Bhutanese Nepali and Somali Bantu communities, respective ethnic associations have provided a venue to preserve cultural and religious traditions, which have helped mediate social adjustment in Vermont. Having opportunities to connect with one’s people, speak one’s mother tongue and celebrate festivals provides a sense of identity and belonging that can also be transmitted to children. Moreover, participation in ethnic community events can provide an opportunity for parents to seek social support in a way that does not further tap their energy the way that seeking such support in their second or third language, and among people with different life experiences and practices might.

Volunteerism in contributing to the community also seems to be a very strong factor in mediating adjustment. Chareka, Nyemah and Manguva (2010) spoke about immigrants volunteering for a variety of reasons including “helping [and] a way of making a difference” (p. 7). Volunteerism may also serve as a mediating factor because giving back to the community (whether it is within their own ethnic subgroup or in the
larger community) is an opportunity for parents to preserve their cultural traditions, role model their indigenous practice of volunteering, and contribute to the community by sharing themselves as resources and supporting New Arrivals and other community members in need.

The third research question sought to answer how Vermont’s New American parenting beliefs and practices changed to adapt to their host culture. It was expected that there would be particular beliefs and practices that parents would like to retain but find incompatible with Vermont culture such that it may cause tension for families. Finding 3 confirmed this hypothesis. New American parents seem to be transitioning from an authoritarian parenting approach to one that is more authoritative in style while also enjoying developing a parent-child communication strategy of more interactive discussions than they were raised with or experienced in their homelands. However, raising children bi-culturally adds a further dimension to the tension of parenting adolescents. New American parents conveyed struggling with (or anticipating struggling with) navigating adolescence with regard to dating culture and concerns about peer influence.

When it comes to dating and intercultural relationships, parents would like their children to maintain their cultural customs of courtship but find that difficult to do as a minority in the host community. Somali Bantu parents added that they are reluctant to follow their custom of early marriage. They sense the stigma surrounding early marriage from their American-born peers, despite the age of consent for marriage being sixteen in the state of Vermont.
Parents also have some clear rules about supervising intercultural peer relationships. For example, sleepovers are rarely, if at all, permitted. Parents are concerned that unsupervised intercultural relationships will lead to poor decision-making for their adolescent children (i.e., partaking in risky behavior such as substance use or sexual behavior). One study confirmed parents’ desire to limit adolescents’ opportunities to fully engage in American culture as the researchers found that adolescents participating in school-based or after-school activities that incorporated their culture served as a protective factor against risky sexual behavior (Jetlova, Fish & Revenson, 2005). Nevertheless, parents have responded to these tensions with feelings of powerlessness at times, as well as hesitantly adapting to some of the host culture’s expectations (dating, for example), while at other times, restricting intercultural exposure and interaction (e.g., media influence, unsupervised peer interaction).

The fourth research question asked how retained childrearing beliefs, values, and practices influenced New Americans’ adjustment in resettlement. It was predicted that retained practices may affect a sense of belonging to the community without having to relinquish one’s previous identity in order to acculturate. This hypothesis was also confirmed. Specifically retained practices and values of respect for elders, cultural traditions and rituals, and native language, in fact, appear to facilitate adjustment to the newly resettled environment while preserving a sense of identity and belonging.

Following the practices and values from their homelands have helped New Americans connect with their ethnic subgroups and build community within community. For example, one Bosnian mother (Case #35) described the significance of her
membership in a traditional Bosnian dance group. For her the dance group is essential so that she can keep tradition alive and teach it to her children. Her group not only meets regularly each month, but performs at events and participates in other social gatherings as well.

The final research question posed the question “To what extent are New American parents comfortable with changes in their parenting approach in their resettled environment?” It was anticipated that parents would have mixed emotions about adaptation as they may be grieving the loss of some customs while embracing others. Surprisingly, fewer parents had mixed feelings about adaptation than expected. Despite the challenges with acculturation and their concerns and disappointments with some loss of mother tongue and cultural traditions, parents generally seemed satisfied with the shift in their parenting practices and approaches as they adjust to life in Vermont. Because research participants were all proficient in English, this indicated a higher level of educational achievement than perhaps many of their fellow ethnic community members. This higher level of education and an ability to communicate easily with the dominant culture may have enabled an easier transition into the host community and therefore facilitated adaptation.

**Summary of Interpretation of Findings**

This chapter provided the variety of practices, values, and beliefs that a sample of New American parents brought with them to resettlement in Vermont. In summary, the preceding discussion exemplified the series of challenges that New American parents face while raising their children in the new environment. The discussion shed light on
how the various aspects of their native cultures have been adapted to parenting in Vermont.

The analyzed findings shaped a multilayered and cohesive synthesis. As is typical with qualitative research, the challenge to make sense of the extensive amount of information and reduce that data in order to reveal significant patterns and themes is essential while concurrently building a framework to present exposed data in relation to the purpose of the study.

There were, however, some limitations with this study. First, the research sample size, which consisted of a total of 61 participants in five focus group discussions and thirty-five individual interviews, was small. Although demographic analysis of gender, ethnicity, and length of time living in Vermont were examined, the data set was too limited to determine if such demographics had an impact on explaining the findings. Second, some focus group discussions may have been further complicated by the limited English-proficiency skills for some members, as well as the use of periodic participant translation in the discussions. Third, because individual interviewees needed to be English-proficient, this may have further limited the pool of participants to those of more highly educated, upper caste, or elevated social class standing. Thus the perspectives that were shared by participants may not reflect all members of their ethnic subgroups. Lastly, there may have been some social desirability bias. For example, it may have been possible that participants were inclined to tell a Caucasian, American-born researcher what they thought she would want to hear with regard to parenting approaches and positive social adjustment to Vermont. Therefore, implications that can be made from this
study are not generalizable, but rather, should be viewed as specific to the experiences of
the study sample itself.

As with all research, potential researcher bias may also be a limitation of this study. As a social work practitioner at heart, there may have been times during
discussions and interviews that the researcher felt the imperative of a call to action to
address participants’ expressed areas of concern or injustice. This may have distracted the
researcher and influenced the iterative process. Additionally, assumptions of the presence
of certain values drawn from the literature review may have also presented a bias.
Methodological techniques such as multiple reviews of transcripts, coding checks, and
seeking out negative cases and disconfirming evidence were used to identify and
minimize any bias while enhancing the reliability and validity of the analysis and
interpretation of data.

Although viewed as a strength rather than a limitation, it is essential to note that
this researcher’s extensive history of both domestic and international social work practice
with marginalized populations has prepared her well to enter into dialogue with New
Americans in such a way as to foster meaningful relationships that allow for the
disclosure of rich data. Her refined skills in establishing relationships that allow for the
depth of exchange and empathetic connection is something that a less experienced
interviewer would unlikely have been able to establish. What has emerged from this is
the New American community’s eagerness to tell their story and enter into a
collaborative relationship to forge additional intercultural dialogue and relationships to
enhance parenting experiences in Vermont.
Recommendations and Conclusion

**Future research.** Future research to further explore two serendipitous findings may also enhance intercultural understanding and lead to future prevention and intervention programming. Exploring the finding of loneliness and isolation with Bhutanese Nepali elders and how that affects childrearing is one area for further examination. With twenty five percent of Bhutanese Nepali participants living in joint families in Vermont, elders are integral to childrearing in these families. Yet, their feelings of loneliness and isolation described by their adult children raises questions about how such feelings may be influencing their caregiving. Additionally, understanding how such feelings impact their general psychosocial wellbeing is also critical in order to better plan programming and social policy to support Bhutanese Nepali elders.

Along with loneliness and isolation of elders, another serendipitous finding was the co-occurrence of the influence of trauma histories with the challenges of parenting in Vermont. Although this co-occurrence was only identified in 10% of the population, nonetheless it is an interesting area that may be explored as the researcher further develops her relationships with the New American community. A few parents spoke about having significant moments when memories of the trauma they experienced during war or in flight and transition left them feeling less patient and emotionally inaccessible for childrearing than they would have preferred. Expanding knowledge about how trauma, particularly resulting from refugee experiences, influences parenting can provide insights to develop additional culturally responsive supports and resources for parents struggling with trauma histories.
Policy. The dissertation findings suggest a few areas for policy development or adaptation. Civic engagement, workforce development, and volunteerism are particular areas that may benefit from further policy development.

Civic engagement. It is essential that civic leadership be representative of the community’s residential population. To that end, policy to enhance opportunities for New American’s civic engagement should be proposed. For example, local boards of governance should ensure an active recruitment process for New Americans to serve on their boards. Furthermore, interpretation services should be available for board and executive committee meetings so that language barriers do not prohibit involvement.

In addition to more representative civic engagement, policy to enable and encourage utilizing community elders to help bridge communication between community members and local civil servants should be developed. For example, when families must interface with local police, if the situation is not emergent, than perhaps an elder can be called upon to first meet with the police to hear the concern and then relay the best way to communicate with the community member. For many, if not most refugees, interfacing with the police raises a heightened level of distrust because the police were often the oppressors in their homelands. Prior to migration, a visit from a police officer often resulted in torture or the permanent disappearance of a relative. Therefore, New Americans tend to see police and other civil servants as dangerous and a threat to their family’s safety rather than as protection. Developing relationships between and among departments of civil service and community elders may enhance the goals of keeping
communities safe for all members. Elders may serve to help facilitate effective, culturally responsive communication and problem solving within the community.

*Workforce development.* Policy to encourage workforce development for New Americans should be expanded. For example, such policy might include adapting some professional licensing regulations so that training outside the U.S. may qualify for professional licensure in Vermont (e.g., engineering fields). Furthermore, if needed, supplemental instruction to address areas that were not covered in training outside of the U.S. may be a contingency of Vermont licensure (e.g., Vermont building code). In this way, New Americans who had professions prior to migration could be supported to enter the workforce in their area of expertise and further contribute their professional skills in resettlement. Similarly, talent development policies in the workplace that help New Americans to move into leadership positions should also be encouraged.

*Volunteerism.* Similarly to workforce development, policy that encourages volunteerism early on in resettlement may further stimulate human capital. Beginning on a local level, convening various stakeholder representatives from the New American community, Vermont Agency of Human Services, Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program, the United Way, and the RISPNet is important in order to develop guiding principles, objectives, and a monitor and evaluation plan of a volunteerism policy. The policy may be piloted locally in Vermont and then revised based upon evaluation. Dissemination of the results of the piloted program and replication elsewhere has the potential to expand policy beyond the local level. More details about outreach to encourage volunteer participation is described below under Volunteerism outreach.
**Program development.** As with suggestions for policy, the findings of this research have inspired some program development ideas. Suggestions for enhancing intercultural relationships in the community and intercultural practices for supporting childrearing are provided below.

**Racial tensions.** As a point of entry for program development, mapping racial tensions by particular geographical locations within Chittenden County, Vermont is essential in order to better target interventions. Currently racial tensions are presenting a very timely issue that is drawing attention in the media and within some Vermont communities. Civic leaders and community members are searching for more effective ways to address these issues. With better understanding of the specific locations and needs of these high-risk geographical locations, existing services can be more effectively engaged while also providing an opportunity for further community development to address the issues.

**Intercultural programming.** Recommendations to enhance intercultural relationships and support parents in raising their children include community organizing efforts such as expanding intercultural dialogue opportunities among New Americans and members of the dominant culture (e.g., navigating adolescent relationships), offering some indigenous cultural preservation activities within which it may be appropriate for dominant culture participants to also engage (e.g., a neighborhood or center-based Diwali celebration or other community events, such as a Bosnian dance night, that can engage New Americans with members of the dominant culture), developing training curricula that incorporates techniques for maintaining indigenous parenting beliefs and cultural
practices while also exchanging ideas among a diverse parenting population (for example, strategies for teaching respect) and developing language preservation schools (perhaps connecting, for example, the Bhutanese Nepali elders with principals in the local Jewish congregations to discuss methods and exchange ideas for additional language and cultural preservation education).

**Volunteerism outreach.** Likewise, in an effort to further maximize human and social capital in the community, volunteer coordinators in various social and human service organizations and other venues must be made aware of the value of volunteerism that is so significant for these New Americans. Outreach to invite New Americans into community volunteer opportunities can serve to better bridge intercultural relationships, enhance English proficiency, and meet unmet needs of the community at large. Social programming could be developed to encourage volunteerism upon resettlement, which can also further enhance language acquisition and social adjustment to the new environment.

**Conclusion.** In an effort to build intercultural relationships around childrearing, it is important to understand the series of challenges that New American parents face when raising their children in their host communities. The findings from this dissertation study resulted in a better understanding of the variety of parenting practices, values, and beliefs that New Americans bring with them and how these have been adapted in Vermont. The findings may help to dispel myths or stereotypes that dominant culture may hold about New Americans while also identifying inspiring, previously untapped areas of social capital.
APPENDICES
YOU ARE INVITED!

Time: TBD
Date: TBD
Place: TBD

REFRESHMENTS AND CHILDCARE WILL BE PROVIDED!

Topic:
Please come help us with our research to learn about different ways of being a parent, including how culture affects beliefs about the best way to raise children. This information may help us revise parenting programs so they incorporate the beliefs of other cultures about childrearing practices. The information will also help service providers improve the strategies they use to help families.

RSVP: Please phone the research office at (802) 999-1367 and tell us if you need an interpreter.
Appendix B: Informed Consent Form

Information about Being in a Research Study
Clemson University
Cultural Reciprocity Study

Description of the Study and Your Part in It
Dr. James McDonell and Julie Richards are inviting you to take part in a research study. Julie Richards is a student at Clemson University, running this study with the help of Dr. McDonell. The purpose of this research is to learn about different ways of being a parent, including how culture affects philosophies, strategies and practices. With this information, we can take suggestions on how to raise children in safe, healthy ways and share this with others. Our hope is to learn from all cultures and promote ideas that have been shown to result in raising children who grow to be well-adjusted adults. Service providers may learn how to better serve people through this.

Your part in the study, including completing a brief survey questionnaire, will be to join a focus group discussion (for up to 90 minutes) to talk about your roles and expectations as parents raising your children in Vermont. We ask for your ideas to help children grow up safe and healthy.

Risks and Discomforts
We do not know of any risks or discomforts to you in this research study. However, if at any time you feel uncomfortable, you may stop participating and/or take a break in the discussion.

Possible Benefits
We do not know of any way that you would benefit directly from taking part in this study. However, your participation in this study may impact service delivery for preventing child maltreatment and building healthier communities.

Incentives
We will provide childcare and refreshments during the focus group sessions.

Protection of Privacy and Confidentiality
We will do everything we can to protect your privacy and confidentiality. We will not tell anybody outside of the research team that you were in this study or what information we collected about you in particular. The focus group interview will be audio-recorded, written, analyzed, and studied in a manner that protects your identity. A transcriptionist (a person who listens to the
audiotape and types your words) will sign a form of confidentiality. Any information will remain confidential and safeguarded.

**Choosing to Be in the Study**
You do not have to be in this study. You may choose not to take part and you may choose to stop taking part at any time. You will not be punished in any way if you decide not to be in the study or to stop taking part in the study.

**Contact Information**
If you have any questions or concerns about this study or if any problems arise, please contact Dr. Jim McDonell at Clemson University at (864) 656-6746 or by email at HYPERLINK “mailto:jmcdnll@Clemson.edu” jmcdnll@Clemson.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights in this research study, please contact the Clemson University Office of Research Compliance (ORC) at 864-656-6460 or HYPERLINK “mailto:irb@clemson.edu” irb@clemson.edu. If you are outside of the Upstate South Carolina area, please use the ORC’s toll-free number, 866-297-3071.

A copy of this form will be given to you.
Appendix C: Phase I Focus Group Demographic Survey

Cultural Reciprocity Focus Group Study

Please circle the answers that best match your response to the questions below (feel free to circle more than one response if that is appropriate). If you are uncomfortable answering any question, please skip the question and move on to the next one. Thank you!

1) What is your age (approximately)?
   a) 18-24 years old
   b) 25-34 years old
   c) 35-44 years old
   d) 45-54 years old
   e) 55-64 years old
   f) 65-74 years old
   g) 75+ years old

2) What is your marital status?
   a) Married
   b) Single, never married
   c) Widowed
   d) Divorced
   e) Married more than once

3) When raising your children in Vermont, who lives/lived in the home with you most of the time?
   a) The other parent of my child(ren)
   b) My child(ren)
   c) My child(ren)’s grandparent(s)
   d) Aunt(s)
   e) Uncle(s)
   f) Cousins
   g) Family Friend(s)
   h) Others: (please state their relationship to your child) ____________________
4) How many children are you raising/have you raised?

1
2
3
4
5
6+

5) Do you live within easy walking distance to people who were raised in the same/similar culture as you?

a) Yes
b) No

6) Where were you raised/where did you grow up?

a) Sub-Saharan Africa
b) North Africa
c) Middle East
d) East Asia
e) Eastern Europe
f) Other: (please describe) ___________

7) What is the highest level of schooling that you have completed?

a) No formal schooling
b) Elementary (some/any)
c) Some high school, no degree
d) High school or Graduate Equivalency Diploma
e) Trade, technical, vocational training
f) Some university, no degree
g) University degree
h) Graduate school, no degree
i) Graduate school degree

8) Are you currently

a) Employed for wages
b) Self employed
c) Volunteer/Intern (Vista/Americorps)
d) Out of work and looking for work
e) Out of work but not currently looking for work
f) A homemaker
g) A student
h) Retired
i) Unable to work

9) Which religion do you practice (please circle all that apply)?

a) Islam
b) Buddhism
c) Hinduism
d) Christianity
e) Other (please describe): ____________
Appendix D: Transcriber’s Pledge of Confidentiality

Cultural Reciprocity Study

Transcriptionist’s Confidentiality Pledge

I, ____________________________, will be transcribing Julie Richards’ recordings of her focus groups for her Cultural Reciprocity study.

I promise to hold all focus groups confidential and to maintain participants’ anonymity. I will not talk of the focus groups to anyone. To do so would otherwise be a serious ethical breach.

_________________________  ___________________________
Signature of Transcriptionist  Date

_________________________  ___________________________
Signature of co-investigator  Date
Appendix E: Phase I Focus Group Interview Schedule

Cultural Reciprocity Study
Focus Group Guiding Questions

What differences are there in the way American parents raise their children and the way children are raised in your home country?

What are the expectations around schooling here, and how are they different than where you come from? For example, helping with homework, or in making sure they get to school on time, etc.

How are children disciplined in your home country? Who does the disciplining? For what reasons would a child be disciplined? Do you feel that is also done here, or how is it different?

In what ways do your parenting beliefs and practices come into conflict with American parenting practices? What about coming into conflict with American laws or policies?

What do you want for your children? Do you think those are the same wishes that American parents have for their children?

What rules do you find particularly helpful to use when raising your children?

Do you have a belief/way of thinking about your job as a parent? What is the most important job of a mother/father?

What things from your country do you think parents or community members in Vermont should do to keep children safe and healthy?
Appendix F: Informed Oral Consent

Clemson IRB2013-282
Cultural Reciprocity Study

Informed Consent Oral Script

I am conducting research about cultural parenting practices and I am interested in your experiences and perspectives as a New American. The purpose of this research is to increase understanding and awareness of cultural practices of raising children in Vermont and its impact on adaptation and retention of culture. Your participation will involve one informal interview that will last between 30 minutes and one hour. This research has no known risks. This research will benefit the academic and social service communities because it helps us to better understand cultural divides and raise awareness that can bridge the divide.

Please know that I will do everything possible to protect your privacy. Your identity or personal information will not be disclosed in any publication that may result from this study. Notes that are taken during the interview will be stored in a secure location.

Would it be all right if I audio record the interview? Saying no to audio recording will have no effect on the interview.
Appendix G: Phase II Individual Participant Demographic Survey

Clemson IRB2013-282
Cultural Reciprocity Study
Demographic Survey for New Americans

1) Are you
   a. Female
   b. Male

2) What is your age (approximately)?

3) What is your marital status?
   a. Married, one partner
   b. Married with more than one partner
   c. Single, never married
   d. Widowed
   e. Divorced

4) In what country were you raised/where did you grow up?

5) When raising your children in Vermont, who lives/lived in the home with you most of the time?

6) Of the people who live(d) in your home, who helped you raise your children?

7) If you raised your children in your homeland, who lived with you there most of the time?

8) Of the people who lived with you in your homeland, who helped you raise your children?

9) How many children are you raising/have you raised in VT?

10) How many children have you raised in your homeland?

11) Do you live within easy walking distance to people who were raised in the same/similar culture as you?
   a. Yes
   b. No
Appendix H: Phase II Individual Interview Schedule

IRB2013-282
Cultural Reciprocity Study

Interview Schedule For New Americans

Parenting Beliefs and Practices

1) What does it mean to you to raise safe, healthy, well-adjusted children?
2) What helps you to raise your child(ren) to like this?
3) What makes it difficult for you?
4) What does ‘safety’ mean to you in terms of your family?
5) What does it mean to you to have a safe environment to raise your children?
6) How does raising children here in Vermont compare with how you might have raised your child in your native land with respect to what we have just talked about earlier?
7) Can you tell me about parenting practices that have been important for you to make sure that you keep now that you live in Vermont?
8) Can you also tell me about parenting practices that you have adapted here in Vermont that you feel pleased with?

Family Caregiving

1) When you talk about family in your culture, who is included in your definition/explanation of family?
2) What does it mean to care for family members in your culture?
3) What do you notice about American-born families and how they care for one another?

Role of Rituals

1) What influence do cultural rituals have on how you raise your children?
2) Are there barriers to practicing these rituals in Vermont?

Neighbors

1) What does it mean to take responsibility for children?
2) In your culture, what is the role of neighbor?
3) What does it mean to be a good neighbor in your culture?
4) How does this compare with your experience in Vermont?
5) Please talk about the community activities that you are involved with in Vermont (e.g., gardening, clubs, library, mosque/church, etc)?
6) What about these opportunities has been satisfying for you? What has been troubling?
**Bi-Cultural**

1) In your culture, what does it mean to be an adult?
2) As your child grows up bi-culturally, how do you manage differences in your expectations compared with your child’s?
3) How do you notice family depending on each other differently in Vermont than in your homeland?

**Social Service**

1) What does social service assistance mean to you?
2) What has been helpful to you from the various organizations and services that help people out in Vermont?
3) What suggestions do you have for social service providers and organizations working with parents to support them in raising healthy, thriving children?
REFERENCES


