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Asia A. Thogmartin for the degree of Master of Science in Human Development and Family Studies presented on December 7, 2017.

Title:  Flying Under the Radar: An Exploratory Assessment of Portland’s Burmese Refugee Parent Needs

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G. John Geldhof

War and persecution have devastating consequences, and the United States (U.S.) has a time-honored commitment to providing refuge to those most afflicted. Over the last four decades, the U.S. has provided sanctuary to more than 3.2 million refugees through its resettlement programs (U.S. Department of State, 2015a). Burma’s long-standing civil war has made it one of the major contributors to the U.S. resettled refugee population (South & Jolliffe, 2015; U.S. Department of State, 2015a; 2016d, n.d.-a). Because of the vast differences between U.S. and Burmese people and their lived experiences, Burmese refugees as a group are potentially more vulnerable to resettlement-related stressors.

The stressors of resettlement are especially amplified for refugee parents (e.g., Berry, 2005; Dumbrill, 2009; Renzaho & Vignievic, 2011). Refugee parents face challenges that go beyond the difficulties faced by non-refugee, native parents, in part because refugee parents are faced with increased familial conflict as a result of resettlement challenges (Atwell, Gifford, &McDonald-Wilmsen, 2009; Reed, Fazel, Jones, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012).
The purpose of this study is therefore to identify the needs of Portland’s Burmese refugee parents, both from the perspective of Burmese refugee parents and the perspectives of Portland-based social service providers. Using a life course perspective, the main research questions of this study are: (a) What are the most prevalent Burmese refugee parent needs, as perceived by Burmese refugee parents? (b) Do these perceived needs vary based on refugee participant age? (c) What are the needs of Burmese refugee parents according to U.S. social systems representatives?

This study uses primary and secondary data in the form of in-depth, one-on-one interviews gathered between 2015 and 2017. Burmese refugee parents (N = 32) and local social service providers (N= 10) shared stories and experiences reflecting challenges and needs faced by refugees living in the Portland metro area. Social service providers shared stories from a professional perspective. Each provider was a representative from one of five social domains namely, education, employment, health care, safety and security, and social networks. Overall, the findings of this study highlight the fact that Burmese refugee parents and social service providers view the needs of the Burmese refugee community differently. Most notable are differences between the relative importance of what refugees need in theory versus in practice. Findings also suggest there are differences in the needs of Burmese refugees based on age, such that indicate there is a need for programs designed with age in mind.

The information gathered from social service representatives in this study can be used by various organizations in the design of resettlement programs that work to effectively fulfill U.S. commitments to refugees.
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Flying Under the Radar:
An Exploratory Assessment of Portland’s Burmese Refugee Parent Needs

by
Asia A. Thogmartin

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

Asia A. Thogmartin, Author
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To my family far, far away.: Mom, my greatest supporter, I miss you. I haven’t been there in person, but I am there in spirit—every step of the way. O koko bam bayandijonga—and today I certainly hope this is true. Dad, you know that you know that you know—that’s inspirational.

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Flying Under the Radar:
An Exploratory Assessment of Portland’s Burmese Refugee Parent Needs

**Chapter 1. Introduction**

War and persecution have devastating consequences, and the United States (U.S.) has a time-honored commitment to provide refuge to those most afflicted. Over the last four decades, the U.S. has provided sanctuary to more than 3.2 million refugees through its resettlement programs. To encourage refugee self-sufficiency, however, the U.S. government only guarantees incoming refugees up to eight months of financial support (Department of State, n.d.; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d.). The time-limited support encourages a rapid transition to life in the U.S., but it also magnifies resettlement-related pressures that may be especially prominent for refugees dissimilar in appearance and culture to mainstream U.S. populations (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012; Hadley & Patil, 2009). As such, any assistance offered must target the specific needs of refugees in ways that help them rapidly overcome the obstacles and challenges they face during resettlement.

The stressors of resettlement are especially amplified for refugee parents, suggesting the need for programs designed specifically to assist this population. In addition to dealing with expected resettlement-related pressures (e.g., learning a new language and cultural norms), refugee parents must also learn to navigate novel education structures and policies, interact with teachers and educators, adapt to unfamiliar parenting rules and expectations, and face a host of challenges that arise from differing acculturation rates between parents and children (e.g., Berry, 2005; Dumbrill, 2009; Renzaho & Vignievic, 2011). Failing to adequately address these challenges results in increasing levels of family conflict (Atwell, Gifford, McDonald-Wilmsen, 2009; Reed, Fazel, Jones, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2012). An increase in familial conflict
intensifies parental stress, which then increases reliance on ineffective childrearing strategies (Webster-Stratton, 1990). In turn, research has linked the use of ineffective parenting strategies to increased behavioral problems among children (e.g., Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Webster-Stratton, 1990). Negative child behaviors increase parental stress, thereby perpetuating a cycle of family conflict.

One way to break the cycle of familial conflict is to reduce ineffective parenting practices through parenting education. Parenting education may be critical for refugee populations, as many parenting education curricula explicitly aim to improve positive parenting practices. Indeed, culturally relevant parenting education is considered a useful tool for supporting resettled refugee parents from around the world (Renzaho & Vignievic, 2011; Williams, 2010).

Burma’s long-standing civil war has made it one of the major contributors to the U.S. resettled refugee population (South & Jolliffe, 2015; U.S. Department of State, 2015a, 2016d, n.d.-a). In the last decade alone, more than 85,000 refugees from Burma have resettled in the U.S. (U.S. Department of State, 2016d). Because of the vast differences between life in the U.S. and Burma, refugees from Burma, as a group, are potentially more vulnerable to resettlement-related stressors than refugees from countries more closely resembling U.S. culture. Parenting education curricula tailored toward the unique needs of refugee parents from Burma may therefore have a particularly strong impact. Note, although the ethnic diversity of Burma’s resettled refugees is expansive, this paper will use the all-encompassing term, “Burmese” for the sake of convenience.

The purpose of this study is therefore to identify the needs of Portland’s refugee parents, from the perspective of both the Burmese refugee parents and Portland-based social service providers, bringing to light similarities and differences between the perspective of those in need
and those meeting the needs. Therefore, the main research questions of this study are: (a) What are the most prevalent Burmese refugee parent needs, as perceived by Burmese refugee parents? (b) Do these perceived needs vary based on refugee participant age? (c) What are the needs of Burmese refugee parents according to U.S. social systems representatives?

This study’s findings will have practical significance to recently resettled and incoming Burmese refugees. Integration and resettlement programs can use the information to design targeted programs, thereby increasing effectiveness. Results of this study additionally stand to inform Portland’s social service organizations and representatives working with refugees of strengths and weaknesses of the current systems to facilitate improvement. Therefore, identification of Portland’s Burmese refugee parent needs is vital to successfully supporting their integration process.
Chapter 2. Literature Review

Refugees

Refugees are a subgroup of the larger population of forcibly displaced people. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), an international agency delegated to protect refugees, there were over 65 million forcibly displaced people worldwide in 2015. Forcibly displaced people are fleeing persecution, war, violence, and human rights violations and fall into one of three categories: internally displaced persons (40.8 million), officially registered asylum-seekers (3.2 million), and refugees (21.3 million). Internally displaced persons (IDPs) have been forced to flee their homes but have not crossed any international borders (UNHCR, 2014). The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines asylum seekers as those who meet the definition of a refugee but only apply for refugee status after arrival in a host country (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 2014; U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015). Refugees are individuals who apply for, and meet the requirements of, refugee status and are approved to enter a host country prior to resettlement (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2015). The U.S. specifically defines who is eligible to apply for refugee status as the following:

…any person who is outside any country of such person’s nationality or, in the case of a person having no nationality, is outside any country in which such person last habitually resided, and who is unable or unwilling to return to, and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of, that country because of persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinion…. (Refugee Act of 1980, p.1)
Years of interethnic violence in Burma has resulted in one of the largest populations of people who meet the criteria for refugee status (UNHCR, 2016).

**Burma**

Historically, Burma’s geographical location, bordered by India, China, and Thailand, made cross-national trade convenient, resulting in vast cultural diversity (Skidmore, 2005). These influences have resulted in various ethnicities, religions, and languages. Officially, Burma has eight major national ethnic groups: Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine, Bamar, and Shan (Tin & Sein, 2014). These groups are further subdivided into more than 130 ethnic identities (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). The country’s primary religion is Buddhism (87.9%), followed by Christianity (6.2%), Islam (4.3%), Animism (0.8%), Hinduism (0.5%), other (0.2%), and none (0.1%) (Central Intelligence Agency, 2015). There are more than 100 languages spoken by the country’s population of approximately 56 million people (Central Intelligence Agency, 2016; Smith, 1999). Indeed, even though citizens of Burma are commonly referred to as “Burmese,” this all-encompassing term minimizes the country’s racial and ethnic diversity.

Some general characteristics of Burmese culture include a patriarchal structure, collectivistic society, and focus on the family. Traditionally, Burma is structured according to patriarchal norms (Jordt, 2005; Spiro, 1977), although there is long-standing debate on the position women hold in Burmese society (Ikeya, 2011; Spiro, 1997). In public women portray a subservient position, but in private they may actually ‘rule the roost’ (Forbes, 1878; Spiro, 1997).

Burma is considered a collectivistic society when compared to Western Europe and North America (Hofstede et al., 2010). Family bonds supersede economic gain, elders are held sacred, and children are obliged to respect their parents (Barron et al., 2007; Spiro, 1977). Insulting or
abusing elders is considered a particularly heinous act (Spiro, 1977). Overall, Burmese families are expected to assist one another in times of need, and these familial bonds are often extended to the larger community (Spiro, 1977).

As noted earlier, the influence of external cultures make Burma rich in diversity. This ethnic diversity, however, contributed to an environment of persecution, especially of ethnic minorities. Ethnic minorities make up one third of the country’s population and are believed by the government to be a threat to the country’s stability (Smith, 1999). The resulting ethnic tensions have contributed to Burma’s long-standing civil war.

**Burmese conflict.** Burma’s interethnic conflict can be traced to the country’s independence from Britain in 1948 when different political factions began the fight for control over the country (Smith, 1999). Suppression of the various political groups, considered by the nationalist party to be the destabilizing minority, have resulted in continued persecution of ethnic minorities and a country ruled by authoritarianism (Smith, 1999).

In 1962, after a decade of totalitarianism disguised as democracy, the socialist party, governed by General Ne Win, led a military coup establishing the Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma. This new government, a military dominated one-party system, increased its authoritarian reign ruling with martial law. Under General Ne Win, Burma became more isolated from outsiders. Within the country, fighting between the military government, pro-democracy groups, and ethnic minorities continued (Rieffel & Rieffel, 2010; Smith, 1999). Any attempts at resistance were suppressed using fear, manipulation, and violence (Cook, Shannon, Vinson, Letts, & Dwee, 2015; Rieffel & Rieffel, 2010; Skidmore, 2003; Smith, 1999). Indeed, even when General Ne Win resigned from his role as president in early 1980, he remained the chairman of the leading Burmese Socialist Program Party until 1988 and continued the brutal suppression of
groups who sought to replace the regime through multi-party elections (Rieffel & Rieffel, 2010; Smith, 1999). Nonetheless, in 1990 one of these groups, the National League for Democracy (NLD), won the national election. The military regime rejected the election results, however, and violently repressed all forms of political dissent. These actions included the repeated house arrest of the NLD leader and subsequent Nobel laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi (Rieffel & Rieffel, 2010; Smith, 1999). Only on November 8th of 2015 did Burma hold what is deemed its most free and fair elections since 1990, again voting in the NLD (Thawnghmung, 2016). Despite election results, as recently as February of 2017, the UNHCR (2017) reported continued acts of extreme violence and persecution against the country’s ethnic minorities.

Life for ethnic minorities in Burma has been, and continues to be, steeped in fear and bloodshed. Refugee reports of widespread community fear, destruction of homes and villages, torture, and forced labor are common (Cook et al., 2015). This long-term violence has resulted in hundreds of thousands of refugees in recent decades (Cook et al., 2015; Skidmore, 2003; Smith, 1999). With living conditions no longer tenable in their home country, ethnic minorities are forced to leave, many fleeing to temporary camps in bordering countries.

**Refugee camps.** Life in temporary refugee camps means experience with loss, instability, dependency, and limited future options. Residents lose their homeland and identity. They hurriedly leave behind homes, family members, friends, communities, and independence. Although, while in camp, residents may establish new social connections, but these connections may be considered unstable given the transient nature of camps. Yet, while refugee camps are considered temporary housing solutions for those fleeing conflict and persecution, the term temporary hardly seems appropriate when the average stay is 17 years (U.S. Department of State, 2015c, 2016a).
Turner (2015) termed this supposed temporary camp lifestyle as an “indeterminate temporariness” that leaves residents in a perpetual state of uncertainty and instability. Refugees living in the camps cannot settle down because they are destined for resettlement, yet their departure date is unknown and at the mercy of external agencies like the UNHCR and the Department of Human Services (Turner, 2015; U.S. Department of State, 2013). Former Kenyan refugee Valentino Achak Deng described life in a refugee camp in the following words: “On the one hand, we were alive, which meant that we were living a life…. But we were nowhere….It was a kind of purgatory” (Eggers, 2007, p. 373).

Exiled in camps, refugees lose their personal agency and become dependent on external support from nongovernmental organizations and relief agencies (Malkki, 1995; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008; Stein, 1981). The poor day-to-day living conditions of refugee camps contribute to long-term negative outcomes for their residents. The availability and quality of provisions related to health and nutrition, such as medical care and food baskets, depend on which resources are available to external agencies (Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; UNHCR, 1996). Residents are subjected to overcrowding, food insecurity, minimal safety and security, exposure to increased levels of STIs, malnutrition, and disease (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012; Fike & Androff, 2016; Whitaker, 2002). Movement outside of camp grounds is restricted under threat of arrest, and employment opportunities within camps are negligible (Cook et al., 2015; Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011). Opportunities for self-sufficiency are therefore limited, leaving many residents feeling frustrated and powerless. A refugee from Kenny and Lockwood-Kenny’s (2011) ethnographic study described daily activity as “Mostly…just sitting at home” (p. 223). These living conditions, in conjunction with previous trauma related to war and persecution, contribute to feelings of powerlessness, depression, anxiety, and increased

Camp residents have three options: voluntary repatriation to the country of origin from which they fled, integration in the country of asylum, or resettlement in a third country (Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011). Voluntary repatriation depends on the refugee’s desire to return, changes in the underlying causes of displacement, and whether the safety and security of the refugee can be assured (Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011). The option of integrating into the host country is often rejected by locals who perceive asylum seekers as a threat to their security and local economy (Jacobesen, 2001). In cases where voluntary repatriation and local integration are not viable options, resettlement offers the only opportunity for life outside of a refugee camp. Resettlement comes with its own set of challenges, however, and the process is often significantly stressful (Agbenyiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012; Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011).

Refugee Resettlement Challenges

Expectations. One of the first challenges faced by many refugees is an overly idealized expectation of their new home country. Prior to arrival in the host country, many refugees have high expectations of their economic and employment opportunities (Mitschke, Mitschke, Slater, & Teboh, 2011; Stein, 1981). In reality, resettled refugees face potential long-term unemployment. Refugees typically lack education, have few employable skills, and face language barriers. The issue of unemployment, in conjunction with unfamiliar financial responsibilities like rent, adds to the stress of resettlement. The discrepancy between refugees’ expectations and reality can also add to existing mental distress caused by the brutality of war, persecution, and life in a refugee camp (Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; Lopes-Cardozo,
Language. Successful acculturation in the U.S. is highly dependent on the ability to speak English (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012). Refugees from non-English speaking countries, like the Burmese, face language barriers that limit opportunities in the host culture. Language is essential for finding and maintaining employment, interacting with social systems, navigating public transportation, and general integration into American society (Gihooly & Lee, 2016; Hauck, Lo, Maxwell, & Reynolds, 2014; Mitschke, Mitschke, Slater, & Teboh, 2011). Without the ability to effectively communicate, integration into the new society is inhibited.

Financial. Financial instability and increased financial responsibilities may result in less than optimal career choices and increased stress. Although refugees receive government assistance upon arrival, assistance is time-limited in order to encourage rapid self-sufficiency (Harkin & Chantavanich, 2013; Refugee Act, 1980; U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, n.d; U.S. Department of State, n.d.). Refugees must quickly find employment in order to meet their basic housing and food needs (Hauck, Lo, Maxwell, & Reynolds, 2014; Mitschke, Mitschke, Slater, & Teboh, 2011). To meet their financial obligations, refugees often take entry-level jobs with low pay and poor work environments. Such conditions can, in turn, lead to poor physical and mental health (Bollini & Siem, 1999).

Discrimination. Refugees also face potential discrimination from host country citizens. Locals may feel refugees threaten their safety, security, and economic resources, especially during times of increased international conflict or economic instability (Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011). Refugees, like the Burmese, who visually and culturally stand apart from the general U.S. population are easy targets for discrimination (Hadley & Patil, 2009), further
inhibiting the integration process. True integration requires, among other things, living free from fear of discrimination (Crisp, 2004). Thus, for Burmese refugees, true integration is a vulnerable notion without support networks.

**Refugee Parent Resettlement Challenges**

Overall, refugees report the resettlement process to be considerably challenging (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012). Refugees who are parents face all the aforementioned burdens, as well as challenges unique to their role as parents. Indeed, there are additional layers of stress involved for refugee parents. In conjunction with pre-and post-resettlement concerns, refugee parents must navigate unfamiliar educational systems and policies, learn to interact with educators and school administrators, adapt to new parenting rules and expectations, and manage challenges that arise from differing intergenerational acculturation rates. The added stress of these refugee-parent-specific concerns threatens quality of parenting practices and, in turn, parents’ well-being and the quality of parenting practices.

**Unfamiliar educational systems and policies.** Upon resettlement, school-aged refugee children are required to enroll in school. This obligation forces parents to navigate unfamiliar educational systems and policies. This process is therefore a potential source of stress, even though their children’s future is often a primary reason for why refugee parents opt for resettlement (Mitschke et al., 2011; Skidmore & Wilson, 2008).

Although some Burmese refugee camps along the Thai-Burmese border provide educational opportunities, those opportunities are both voluntary and rudimentary (Kenny-Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008; Watkins, Razee, & Richters, 2012). The education systems are neither accredited nor fully inclusive (Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008). The language of instruction often excludes many residents, for instance (Watkins, Razee, & Richters,
Indeed, Watkins, Razee, and Richters (2012) found educational experiences varied significantly among refugees, with some refugees never even having held a pen before.

Unfamiliarity with the education system, and varying levels of education that include illiteracy, prevent many Burmese parents from fully understanding the U.S. educational system and its policies. Without this understanding, parents cannot fully participate in their children’s education. Parents must blindly trust that the U.S. educational system will appropriately do its job.

Interacting with educators and administrators. School-aged children are required to enroll in school, and this entails parent-teacher or parent-administrator interactions another potential source of stress for Burmese refugee parents. In general, Burmese culture dictates that authorities should rarely be challenged (Skidmore & Wilson, 2008). Teachers, along with other professionals such as lawyers and civil servants, symbolize authority, power, and respect (Maung, 1964; Skidmore & Wilson, 2008). Students are taught to respect teachers, whose social role is considered far superior to that of a student. In fact, for students to participate in debate or discussion with a teacher is considered improper in Burma (Han Tin, 2008; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008). Adult refugees with this historically embedded training may find interacting with teachers in the U.S. difficult.

The inability of parents to fully participate in their children’s education has far-reaching negative consequences for families. Ying and Han (2008) found that, among immigrant families, having parents who are not actively involved in school volunteering, parent-teacher conferences, and home-time education resulted in poor family cohesion. These outcomes directly impacted childhood depression and self-esteem.

Adapting to new parenting rules and expectations. The goal of parenting is to provide
children with a safe environment and necessary survival skills while guiding them through normative developmental stages. How this process takes place varies between cultures, however (Harkness et al., 2011). The Burmese are considered a collectivistic society that promotes interdependence, obedience, and the placement of group needs above the self. By contrast, more individualistic societies like the U.S. tend to emphasize autonomy and self-reliance (Fike & Androff, 2016; Triandis, 1994; Yaman, Mesman, van IJzendoorn, Bakermans-Kranenburg, & Linting, 2010). These differing values and ideals are transmitted intergenerationally through parenting. Therefore, normative parenting practices from a collectivistic society may not translate well to life in an individualistic society. Practices that uphold different values and principles could result in refugees’ parenting being called into question, which can further increase parental stress (Tajmia & Harachi, 2010).

There is also the prospect of refugee children rejecting their parents’ parenting styles. Baumrind (1972) found that children consider parenting styles that are inconsistent with cultural norms to be unacceptable. For example, spanking is an accepted form of discipline in Burma. Spanking is no longer a culturally accepted form of discipline in the U.S., however. Resettled Burmese children may therefore view spanking as an unacceptable practice because they quickly learn to identify differing home and community parenting practices through daily peer interactions.

**Differing intergenerational acculturation rates.** A potential source of family conflict stems from the notoriously different rates at which parents and children acculturate (Gilhooly & Lee, 2016; Lewig, Arney, & Salverson, 2010; Ying & Han, 2008). Acculturation is the process of cultural and psychological changes that occur in the individual as a result of accommodations made when merging different groups (Berry, 2005). Children are immersed in the culture and
language of their new country through daily school attendance and peer influence. Parents, on the other hand, often lead more isolated lives in the community (Lewig, Arney & Salverson, 2010; Ying & Han, 2008). While parents work to retain and share their traditional values, children begin to embrace new cultural norms. This difference in acculturation often results in family conflict (Schofield, Kim, Parke, & Coltrane, 2008).

Differences in acculturation rates, if not moderated by positive parenting practices, increases the risk of children’s negative externalized behaviors (Marsiglia, Nagoshi, Parsai, Booth, & Castro, 2014; Schofield, Kim, Parke, & Coltrane, 2008), thereby continuing the cycle of family conflict. For example, family conflict resulting from refugee parents use of culturally dissimilar parenting practices increases rebellion in children, thereby increasing parental stress and leading to more punitive and critical parenting strategies (Webster-Stratton, 1990). These ineffective parenting strategies can then lead to increased negative externalized behaviors in children (e.g., Brooks-Gunn & Duncan, 1997; Self-Brown, LeBlanc, Kelley, Hanson, Laslie, & Wingate, 2006; Webster-Stratton, 1990). These behaviors increase family conflict and parental stress, further compromising supportive parenting practices. This cycle of negative parent-child interactions can lead to poor mental health and academic outcomes for children of refugees (Kim, Chen, Wang, Shen, & Orozco-Lapray, 2013).

Pre- and post-resettlement challenges make quick self-sufficiency, integration, and acculturation difficult goals to attain. To help refugees attain these goals, the U.S. Federal government provides assistance through contracted volunteer organizations. These nationwide volunteer agencies, referred to as VOLAGs, work directly with refugees to fulfill the guaranteed support offered by the U.S.

**Volunteer Agencies**
The U.S. Department of State, in conjunction with the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement (HHS/ORR) and nine primary domestic volunteer resettlement agencies (VOLAGs), organizes the resettlement of incoming refugees (U.S. Department of State, n.d.-b). The nine VOLAGs include: Church World Service (CWS), Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC), Episcopal Migration Ministries (EMM), Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), International Rescue Committee (IRC), U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Services (LIRS), United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and World Relief Corporation (WR). These organizations then contract work to over 350 affiliate organizations spread throughout the U.S. These affiliated organizations, also referred to as VOLAGs, provide resettlement support directly to refugees.

The State of Oregon works with four affiliate VOLAGs: Catholic Charities, Lutheran Communities, Sponsors Organized to Assist Refugees (SOAR), and Immigration and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) (Oregon Department of Human Services, n.d.-a). These organizations provide services that fulfill U.S. refugee policies’ guarantee to support refugees during the resettlement process. This support includes time-restricted financial assistance, medical coverage, English language classes, job readiness support, employment services, and other programs designed to aid the integration process.

One such program, a specialized Burmese Parenting Education (BPE) series, was designed in response to the voiced needs of Burmese refugee parents and concerns that arose from local community members. On one hand, Burmese parents voiced the need for basic information on issues like budgeting and banking. On the other hand, community members made VOLAG case workers aware of culturally problematic parenting practices within the Burmese
refugee community. Specifically, reports of children playing unsupervised in areas of high traffic were brought to the attention of caseworkers and VOLAG staff. Although unsupervised play is perhaps culturally acceptable for children within refugee camps, it is considered neglect in the U.S. (Barron et al., 2007) Such parenting practices are cause for potential legal consequences, which impede the integration process. The BPE was designed and facilitated by one of the local VOLAGs, specifically to address both self-identified and community observed needs of Burmese refugee families. The BPE provided the impetus and Burmese refugee parent participants for this study.

**Burmese Parenting Education Program.** The BPE provided a 12-week curriculum designed by a local VOLAG refugee case manager who was trained as a parenting education facilitator. As a Burmese national, the facilitator incorporated his cultural knowledge, awareness of U.S. social system concerns, and first-hand interactions with the refugee community in designing the curriculum. For example, based on his Burmese cultural knowledge, role-playing was removed as a suggested method of instruction because it is a foreign and potentially disrespectful concept to Burmese parents (Moe, Personal Communication, 2016).

The BPE curriculum allocated one topic per week, which is covered in two hour-long weekly meetings. Curriculum topics include U.S. social skills, physical and mental development of children, family morals, budgeting, violence and domestic violence, smoking and drug use, health, and discipline. The curriculum topics were based on parents’ vocalized needs and consistent problems observed by VOLAG staff and other community members.
Chapter 3. Theoretical Perspective

The life course perspective compels us to reflect on the complex relationships between individuals and their environments (Elder, Shanahan, & Jennings, 2015). The rapidly changing contexts refugees experience during resettlement likely have profound effects on their life trajectories. Refugees are forced to leave their countries of origin, their homes, and their social connections. They are forced to resettle, often multiple times, to unfamiliar territories where they must learn new cultural expectations. Therefore, because refugee development is shaped by multiple contexts and various social networks, some of which may have conflicting norms, it stands to reason that exploration of refugee needs would benefit from insights provided by the life course perspective.

Specifically, this study draws on three principles of the life course perspective: (a) historical time and place, (b) linked lives, and (c) timing in the life. These principles heavily focus on the significant influence of one’s distinctive social and geographical context, as well as the interpersonal connections, on refugee integration. Because integration is directed, in part, by when, where, and who influences refugee populations, using life course principles to frame this study may illuminate needs of which refugees themselves are unaware of and clarify which individuals are essential to meeting those needs. The following three sections delineate how these principles influence this study using examples specific to Burmese refugee parents.

Historical Time and Place

A major tenet of the life course perspective which holds that individuals are inseparable from, and therefore shaped by, the environment in which they develop (Elder, Shanahan & Jennings, 2015). In any given society, the historical time, the laws, and social contexts, along with any changes that occur therein, shape the life experiences and characteristics of those
present. Refugee characteristics are thus shaped, in part, by the various events, policies, and laws they experience.

Refugees present unique circumstances regarding the influence of historical time and place because they are forcibly shaped by multiple, potentially contradicting, contexts. Unlike other migrant groups, refugees are forced out of their country of origin into a life of exile. Their lived experiences are not only shaped by their countries of origin, but also by multiple “temporary” settings, such as refugee camps located in bordering countries. Upon resettlement, especially if accepted into high-resource countries, refugees must acclimate to dissimilar environments than they are accustomed to (Fazel, Reed, Panter-Brick, & Stein, 2011).

In the case of Burmese refugees resettled in the U.S., a high-resource country, there are undoubtedly stark differences between past and present lived experiences. The following sections highlight legal and social differences between Burma, refugee camps, and the U.S. These examples are not meant to identify refugee parent needs comprehensively, but rather justify the framing of this study.

**Legal differences.** Some of the laws and policies that govern the citizens of Burma also directly create refugee populations and shape many of their characteristics. Generally speaking, laws and policies create a broad context that encourages and/or discourages certain outcomes. For example, Burma’s Citizenship Act of 1982 supports discrimination and persecution against ethnic minorities, allowing the government to rid the country of certain groups. The Citizenship Act, designed by the nationalist Burmese government, only grants citizenship to people who can trace their family’s residency prior to 1823 (International Labour Organization, n.d.; Pyithu Hluttaw, 1982). This law renders various ethnic minorities, like the Rohingya Muslims, stateless and unprotected from government persecution. Such persecution has led many Rohingya
Muslims, amongst other ethnic minorities, to flee Burma (e.g., Soloman, 2016). These types of persecutory laws shape Burmese refugees’ fear of authority and create the need for international resettlement and refugee camps.

Burmese refugees who reside in camps located in bordering countries are subject to the laws of the country in which the camps exist, laws which also influence the development of refugee characteristics. In some cases, the laws governing camps leave room for further abuse of refugees as non-citizens, thereby increasing refugees’ fear of authority and decreasing their already unstable sense of security. Mae La, one of the largest Burmese refugee camps, lies on the border of Burma and Thailand (Lee, 2012), and Thailand has refused to ratify the 1951 Refugee Convention, drafted, in part, to secure agreement on the international definition of refugee (UNHCR, 2015). This means the Thai government has control over who may or may not register as a refugee. Unregistered refugees are not only ineligible for third country resettlement, but they are also vulnerable to further human rights violations and abuse by corrupt government officials while trying to secure their registration as refugees. These conditions further reinforce Burmese refugees’ fear of authority and lack of security, making them less inclined to voice their needs after resettlement.

In welcoming countries like the U.S., laws and policies guide resettlement programs on issues around resource availability, resulting in strict limits on everything from government assistance (as discussed earlier) to the refugee eligibility criteria—all of which directly impact refugees at every stage of the process. Prior to 1975, U.S. refugee policies were drafted to meet the needs of Europeans fleeing communist governments (CIA, 2013; Zolberg, Astri, & Sergio, 1989). Subsequent changes to U.S. laws, like the enactment of the Refugee Act of 1980, extended the parameters of who qualifies as a refugee. These changes allow a broader scope of
international applicants, opening eligibility opportunities for populations dissimilar to U.S. mainstream culture such as those from Burma. However, the demographic details of who and how many applicants qualify is determined by the current sitting U.S. President. The President, in consultation with congress, has the right to alter incoming refugee demographics “…justified by humanitarian concerns or is otherwise in the national interest.” (Refugee Act of 1980, p.103). The recurring changes to eligibility criteria, based on reasons provided by the President, can result in prolonged refugee family reunification efforts and increased incidents of discrimination, especially for those applicants vastly dissimilar to U.S. mainstream populations, like those from Burma.

The diverse legal contexts experienced by refugees have likely exerted a profound influence on individual refugees’ life trajectories. The difference in life trajectories results in a gap between what refugees once needed to survive and what is now expected for them to thrive. Burmese refugees are taken out of stagnant, low-resource, policy-driven environments and placed in a highly active, high-resource, policy-driven context that requires different skill sets to manage. It is in these knowledge gap areas refugee needs will be most prominent.

This study explicitly acknowledges these legal influences by keeping in mind that (a) the development of refugees’ sense of security has been dampened by laws that result in trauma, experiences with discrimination, and fear of authority; and (b) refugees have limited knowledge of U.S. laws. The lack of security and limited knowledge of U.S. law may result in refugees feeling uncomfortable in openly expressing their needs in a country whose laws are meant to protect against such violations. Therefore, gathering supplemental information from U.S.-based social service representative who are influenced by, and familiar with, U.S. laws and policy provides this study with a more holistic view of refugee needs.
**Social differences.** Social contexts, influenced by the historical events in any given geographical location, shape the characteristics of a society. Burma is a socialist country with a collectivistic society where Buddhism is its major religion (Hofstede et al., 2010). There is a focus on caring for family and the larger community, and there is an overall expectation of communal assistance during times of need (Spiro, 1977). Respect for elders is an expectation within families, and children are expected to be obedient and dutiful (Barron et al., 2007; Spiro, 1977). Men and women share similar rights, although there are some professions women are prohibited from practicing (e.g., Skidmore, 2005). Traditional healers are still highly valued, and it is common for Burmese to turn to food and herbs as a first line of defense against illness (McGinnis, 2012; Skidmore, 2002).

The social context in refugee camps share similarities with those in Burma. The social context in refugee camps is reportedly influenced by religion and traditional Burmese social norms (Benner et al., 2010). Families still ascribe to community-based lifestyles where individual lives revolve around caring for the community (Koh, Liamputtong, & Walker, 2013). Unfortunately, protracted camp living, especially for those born and raised in camps, also discourages independence. Camps have limited resources and educational opportunities, rules that restrict mobility outside of camp boundaries, limited space for food production, and residents experience high levels of stigma from bordering towns (Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; Cardozo, Talley, Burton, & Crawford, 2004). These and other restrictions render refugees dependent on external non-governmental organizations to meet most, if not all, of their needs (Cook et al., 2015; Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011; Oh & van der Stouwe, 2008; Stein, 1981).

The stark social differences between the U.S. and Burma leave much to which refugees must adapt. The U.S. is considered an individualistic, Judeo-Christian society in which
individuals are motivated by their desires, rights, and needs (Triandis, 1995). In the U.S., self-reliance, personal choice, agency, and independence are valued (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). These values contradict the socialist Burmese society and high levels of dependency promoted in refugee camps. In the U.S., children are encouraged to seek independence, pursue their personal goals, and engage with authority figures (Lareau, 2011). These expectations are in direct opposition to the cultural norms of the Burmese. The current study is informed by and accounts for these socio-contextual differences by interviewing both parents and service workers, acknowledging that parents depend on the relationships and services offered to fill in the gap between Burmese and U.S. culture.

Framing this study with the life course principle of historical time and place in mind highlights the considerable differences between each country’s laws and social contexts. Given these contextual differences, along with findings from previous literature, I have identified five domains in which needs may be especially salient. The five identified domains, which vary by context are: safety and security, education, healthcare, employment, and social networks. These five are therefore, (a) areas with the highest potential for refugee need, (b) categories from which to recruit social service providers, and (c) provide direction in the structuring of this study’s questions. Historical time and place has ultimately provided this study with the direction necessary to identify possible domains of refugees most pressing needs.

**Linked Lives**

The principle of linked lives emphasizes the interconnectedness of lived experiences and highlights the vital role that relationships play in the provision or removal of life opportunities. The most salient relationships, like the bonds between parents and their children, tend to be the most influential to life course trajectories (Elder, Johnson, & Crosnoe, 2003). A parent’s decision
to apply for refugee status changes the trajectory of his or her child’s life. Likewise, a child’s response to resettlement impacts the life trajectories of his or her parents. However, the principle extends beyond immediate family members and also includes less intimate relationships as with friends, community members, teachers, religious leaders, and beyond.

In the case of refugees—whose most salient relationships may be severed by the circumstances of war, persecution, and the resettlement process (Fike & Androff, 2016; Kenny & Lockwood-Kenny, 2011)—access to relevant opportunities becomes reliant on links to social service representatives. Links between the lives of refugees and representatives from various federal, state, and non-profit organizations provide refugees with agency-specific opportunities. Each agency specializes largely in one area: police are linked to safety and security, teachers with education, and healthcare workers with health and wellbeing. The representatives of these varying agencies encompass the training, knowledge, and perspective of their profession; familiarity with relevant policies; awareness of current political events; an understanding of the culture of their community; and experience working directly with refugee populations. From this vantage point, agency representatives possess valuable professional insight into what refugees need not only to survive, but thrive, in their community—specially for refugees at higher risk of integration challenges such as those from countries dissimilar to the U.S. (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012; Hadley & Patil, 2009).

Through their work connecting refugees to relevant resettlement programs, social service representatives simultaneously provide refugees with resettlement opportunities while fulfilling U.S. obligations to support successful integration and rapid self-sufficiency. Because of time constraints, resettlement programs should target specific group needs and issues surrounding integration into the local culture in which they resettle. Social service representatives should be
important consultants in the design of relevant programs given their direct work with refugee, their expertise in their field, and their knowledge of local culture. Furthermore, access to relevant resettlement programs depends on social service representative’s intimate knowledge of refugee needs. Therefore, delivery of relevant programs is directly related to the links between social service representative and their refugee clients.

Representatives of various organizations become, even if only initially, the most fundamental connection refugees have to their new environment and any opportunities therein. These roles make representatives significant informants to this study’s goal of identifying agency specific needs of Burmese refugee parents. The information gathered from social service representatives in this study can be used by various organizations in the design of resettlement programs that work to effectively fulfill U.S. commitments to refugees.

**Timing in the Life**

The principle of “timing in the life” is a multifaceted component of the life course perspective. The principle stresses the impact of time. More specifically, when, in the life course, events occur, impacts the lived experience and developmental outcomes. The impact of timing can be considered at multiple levels (Lerner, Schwartz, & Phelps, 2009), but for the purposes of this study, only the impact at the individual level is considered. For example, at the individual level, age is an influencing factor on the impact of resettlement. Indeed, resettlement for a 5-year-old refugee differs in process and outcome as compared to a 32- or 66-year-old. The child is immersed in the new culture and language through mandated school enrolment and subsequent peer interactions. Thus, language acquisition and acculturation are accelerated. Conversely, the adult and older adult will experience less consistent and less frequent culture and language exposures. This is especially true for the older adult, who based on age, may be excluded from a
work environment. The timing of resettlement results in several differences in the lived experiences, acculturation rates, and, ultimately, developmental outcomes of refugees. Framing this study with timing in the life in mind highlights the potential for differences between Burmese refugee parents of different age groups.

**Research Questions**

This study focuses on Burmese refugee parents for a variety of reasons. First, as noted earlier, Burmese refugees comprise one of the largest resettlement groups in the U.S., and as Burma continues to experience political turmoil, it will likely remain a high priority for U.S. humanitarian efforts. Second, refugee populations at the highest risk of inhibited integration are those who come from countries vastly dissimilar, culturally, to that of the host land, making Burmese refugees some of the most vulnerable incoming groups. Third, because of their fear of authority, Burmese refugees may be unwilling to voice their needs openly. This hesitancy makes them more vulnerable to a failed or prolonged integration process, which is at odds with the objectives of U.S. refugee policy. Given these reasons, the significant role social service representatives play in refugee lives, and the goal of identifying the needs of Burmese refugee parents, I explore the following three questions:

1) What are the most prevalent needs, perceived by Burmese refugee parents?

2) Do these perceived needs vary based on refugee age?

3) What are the needs of Burmese refugee parents as perceived by local social service providers?
Chapter 4. Methods and Materials

This exploratory qualitative needs assessment uses both primary (social service providers) and secondary data (refugee parents) collected by way of in-depth, one-on-one interviews. Research team members gathered data between 2015 and 2017. Furthermore, researchers used a purposive sampling approach to recruit participants with specific knowledge and expertise in refugee needs.

Participants

Participation was open to participants of any gender and education level, although all participants had to be over the age of 18 and able to provide verbal informed consent. Team members provided all participants with a $25 gift card as incentive to participate. However, law enforcement participants declined the gift as a matter of professional courtesy.

Parenting education series participants. This study used secondary data, collected from Burmese refugee parents in 2015 for a related study, to identify parents’ own perspective on their needs. The data were collected for a program evaluation looking at the efficacy of a Burmese specific parenting education (BPE) program designed by a Portland-based, refugee-specific volunteer organization. The total participants of the study \((N = 32)\) were divided into two groups: those who had attended the parenting series \((n = 25)\) and those who had not attended the parenting series \((n = 7)\).

Burmese parent and caregiver participants were recruited by the VOLAG BPE course facilitator, a Burmese man born and raised in Burma and educated in the U.S. As a dual national, he is fluent in both Burmese and English. He is also fully accustomed with both Burmese and U.S. culture. The BPE facilitator worked between 2012 and 2016. His initial position with the organization was as a case worker, after which he was the BPE designer and facilitator. The
BPE facilitator contacted parents and caregivers via telephone and in person using his class registry and Burmese refugee registry.

Table 1 includes demographic characteristics of parent/caregiver participants (N = 32). The average age of the sample was 38.5 years (SD = 12.47, range = 19 to 66 years). The sample was primarily female (15.6% male), and 9.37% of participants were single. Participants had an average of two children in the house (SD = 1.29, range = 1 to 5) with one participant having no children. The sample had multiple ethnic identities represented, although some are not members of the eight officially recognized groups (43.7% Karen, 25% Chin, 9.3% Kachin, 15.6% Rohingya, and 6.2% unreported). The average time lived in the U.S. is estimated at 29.5 months (SD = 17.2, range = 4 to 60 months).

Social service representatives. Interviews were conducted with representatives from five social service domains. The sample of social service participants (N = 10) included five male (50%) and 5 females (50%), each representing one of five domains. These domains include: safety and security (n = 2), education (n = 2), health care (n = 2), employment services (n = 2), and social network (n = 2). The average experience in their respective fields was 13.4 years (SD = 3.9, range = 2 to 37 years). These domains represent integral pillars of the community and provide key services to refugees. Demographic characteristics about the social service representatives can be seen in Table 2.

This study considers representatives of each of these five spheres extensions of their professional domains, and their domain-specific programs and policies. The representatives are therefore the link between refugees and services or programs. They provide insight, specific to their professional area, about what refugees need to access services and successfully integrate into their communities. Representatives are more than links to services because they also bring a
familiarity with U.S. culture, customs, laws, and policies that impact their clients. They are also familiar with local resources (e.g., city transportation, location of grocery stores, beneficial community engagement activities). As such, these representatives hold valuable contextual knowledge that informs their perspective on what refugee families need for successful integration.

Safety and security representatives \( (n = 2) \) had an average of 14-years of experience as police officers, who work to serve and protect all community members. Both have first-hand experience working with and responding to calls within Portland’s refugee community. Through their interactions, law enforcement participants spoke to refugee parent needs related to safety, security, laws, and customs.

The education participants for this study \( (n = 2) \) have an average of 23.5-years experience working in Portland’s public school sector. Both teachers have experience working directly with refugee students and their families through social interactions, curriculum teachings, parent-teacher conferences, after-school programs, and home visits. The education participants’ perspectives inform this study as to the needs of refugee parents related to their children’s education and acculturation process.

Healthcare representatives for this study \( (n = 2) \) have an average of three-years experience in the field of public health specific to refugee services. The participants both have experience working with clinicians and other healthcare providers as well as designing refugee and immigrant specific programs. This study’s healthcare participants provide broad insight into the physical and mental health needs of refugees gained through direct care and public health programs.
The employment sphere representatives \( (n = 2) \) averaged six-years experience working in the employment sphere, meaning they provided employment, training, and/or assistance to refugees in finding employment. The first employment representative’s position focuses on training and educating refugees in preparation for employment. The second informant is a local employer of refugees from the community. These services are critical to reducing the unemployment rates and government dependence within refugee communities. These participants work directly with refugees and are privy to needs specific to refugee parents’ employment training, work ethic, skills, and available opportunities.

Social network representatives \( (n = 2) \) share an average of 20.5-years experience as prominent figures within the refugee community. As professionals in the Portland community who are invested in refugees, the social network participants provide informal and sometimes formal support, advice, and guidance to refugees, while bridging the gap between refugees and the external community. Both social network representatives are foreign nationals who are fully acculturated and integrated into U.S. culture. This duality fills the gap between refugee communities and the external community. From this trusted vantage point, social network leaders have access to refugee-voiced needs more so than any other group.

**Interview Protocol**

The interviews for this study used semi-structured protocols which were tailored to the parents, caregivers, and the varying social service representatives. Because the interview protocol for study participants varies between parents/caregivers and organization representatives, the description of interview protocols is separated by participant groups.

**Parent and caregiver interview protocol.** Burmese parenting education series participants were interviewed in Burmese by a bilingual Burmese national. These interviews
were conducted in the homes of the participants. Interview guides for parent and caregiver participants were written in English, using simple language in order to accommodate the translation process and our illiterate participants (see Appendix A). The interview guide consisted of questions geared toward extracting refugee parent and caregiver needs by identifying their biggest challenges, such as: “What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced since arriving in the country?” This open-ended question allowed parent and caregiver participants the opportunity to tell specific stories about challenges they had encountered. The parent/caregiver interviews were translated into English and transcribed by the Burmese speaking interviewer.

**Social service representative interview protocol.** All social service provider interviews were conducted in English either in person, via Facetime, or telephone. The social service participants were recruited and interviewed by the author based on their professional positions, and their interactions with refugee families. The semi-structured interview guides for the social agency representatives (Appendix B), were adapted from the related Burmese parenting education program study and were primarily comprised of open-ended questions to encourage the sharing of personal experiences. For example, all participants were asked, “In your opinion, what are the needs of Burma’s refugee parents?” We followed up this question with, “How are these needs being met?,” “What are some of the barriers to meeting these needs?,” and “What are some strategies to overcoming these barriers?” These broad questions allowed participants the opportunity to talk, in depth, about their understanding of refugee needs while allowing for topic specific probes. This format provided the opportunity for each interview to follow a unique and organic path.
All interviews were conducted in a location of the participant’s choice and were scheduled to last 30-45 minutes. Social service participant interviews often extended beyond the 45-minute mark as a result of the participant invitation to continue. The average length of the social service provider interviews was 67 minutes. All interviews were transcribed by research team members.

Analysis

The analytic methodology used for this study was qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is a systematic classification process that identifies categories, codes, and themes within the interviews to provide a greater understanding of the overall data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This methodology results in a summary of inferences and findings from within and across the data based on the objective of the study (Krippendorff, 1989; Schreier, 2012). The objective of this study was to identify Burmese parent refugee needs from the perspective of Burmese refugee parent and local social service providers living in Portland, Oregon. To achieve this goal, this study used both a deductive and inductive approach throughout the analysis phase, delineated in the sections below: (a) codebook, (b) intercoder reliability, and (c) coding process.

**Codebook.** Based on previous literature, theory, and the research questions, the author created a codebook which consisted of four sections: (1) Whose Needs, (2) What Needs, (3) Met or Unmet, and (4) Who Met the Needs. The first section, “Whose Need” was created for the purpose of later parsing out whose needs each participant was identifying. It consisted of 14 codes with options like, “Self,” “Spouse,” and “Parents” to choose from. For example, if a parent participant discussed the needs of their spouse, the need was coded under “Spouse.” If a service provider identified a parent-specific need, it was coded under “Parent.” This process allowed for isolation of parent-specific needs during analysis.
The second section, “What Needs,” was created for the purpose of categorizing various types of needs identified in participant transcripts. The section was divided into seven categories identified in previous literature as having the greatest contextual and cultural differences between the two geographical locations, U.S. and Burma. The seven major “Need” categories were as follows: (1) Basic needs (2) Employment, (3) Education, (4) Safety and Security, (5) Social Network, (6) Organizations and Systems, and (7) Acculturation. Each of these categories consisted of related itemized codes. Some of the itemized codes were identified through previous literature reviews (deductive), but many codes emerged from the interview transcripts themselves (inductive). For example, in the “Basic Needs” category, previous literature suggested the necessity for itemized codes like, “Food,” “Water,” and “Housing.” However, through repeated reading of the transcripts, “Transportation” emerged as a code to be added to the larger category. The process of adding itemized codes to each category resulted in a total of 77 category specific codes (see Appendices G and H). This section provided an opportunity for this study to identify the hierarchy of needs by participant group.

The third section, “Met or Unmet” provided coders the option of labeling needs as “Met,” or “Unmet.” The decision of whether a need was met or unmet depended on how the participant spoke about the need. If the need was discussed as something hoped for, it was coded as unmet. If the need was something they spoke of as currently having or in the process of getting (such as housing), it was coded as met. The number of words coded were calculated as a percentage of total words across each category, allowing the findings to reflect what percentage of coded words focused on met versus unmet needs. This section allowed this study to compare whether identified needs were perceived as met or unmet between the two participant groups.

The final section, “Who Met the Needs” consisted of three categories, “Organizations,”
“Family,” and “Community.” These codes were only used in the case of met needs, allowing the study to identify where refugees received the most support in meeting their needs. The four major sections and their subsequent categories and codes were used throughout the coding process.

The codebook and all 42 transcribed interviews were uploaded to NVivo Pro 11 (QSR International), a qualitative data analysis software, for data management and coding. All 42 interviews were read by the author, several times. The author, who conducted all 10 service provider interviews also read transcripts while listening to the audio recordings for reminders of mood, context, and cadence of the speaker. This process allowed for full immersion in the data, a part of the qualitative content analysis process (Elo & Kyngas, 2008).

**Intercoder reliability.** Twenty-percent of the parent interviews and 20% of five of the service provider interviews were provided to the study’s second coder. The second coder was used to assess the reliability of the coding structure of this study, in keeping with contemporary research on the increased practice of establishing intercoder reliability (ICR) in qualitative research (MacPhail, Khoza, Abler, & Ranganathan, 2016). Research indicates a high level of ICR establishes the coding is reliable and replicable, thereby strengthening the scientific validity of the qualitative study findings (MacPhail et al., 2016).

The author and second coder followed a systematic approach to establish ICR. After independently coding the same portion of a transcript, the coded documents were merged and the codes compared using NVivo Pro 11’s coding comparison function. The resulting report presented kappa and a percentage of agreement **per code**, but not overall. In order to determine overall agreement, the comparison data was exported to Excel where kappa was established both per section (i.e., “Whose Need,” “What Need,” “Met or Unmet,” and “Who Met the Need”) as
well as overall agreement that included all of the aforementioned sections. The resulting levels of agreement provided us a baseline of overall agreement while indicating which specific sections were most lacking in agreement. Once areas of disagreement were identified, the author and second coder met to discuss all discrepancies, with the intention of reaching 100% agreement. In the cases where agreement could not be reached, the offending section and codes were presented to the primary investigator whose input was the determining factor. This systematic process was repeated for each of the transcripts selected for ICR purposes.

Coding process. The first cycle of coding used Saldana’s (2009) descriptive coding method. Descriptive coding consists of an independent line-by-line reading of each transcript by both coders who then identify passages deemed meaningful to each of the research questions. Team members then assigned codes to the passages using the summarizing categories and codes from the established codebook.

Coders were required to code each meaningful passage using codes from a minimum of three of the four major sections, depending on the response. For example, for the statement “I don’t speak English” each coder needed to decide: (1) whose need was being identified?; (2) what need was identified or inferred from the statement?; (3) was this a met or unmet need? and; (4) who was meeting this need? Using the aforementioned statement, the respective coding per section would be, “Self”, “English language classes, “Unmet” and, in this case, the need was unmet and therefore this final section was not deemed applicable. This coding structure was applied to all 42 interviews.

The second cycle of coding, conducted by the author alone, was the process of reorganizing and synthesizing similar first cycle codes into select categories to find broader themes in the data (Saldana, 2009). Because the established codebook was highly detailed, much
of the second cycle of coding consisted of collapsing similar codes into broader categories. For example, under the Education category the itemized codes “interpreter” and “in-class communication” were condensed to form a broader category which addressed the need for the, “Ability to communicate in class.” Given the precise structure of the codebook, reorganization of the codes was kept to a minimum. The first- and second-cycle coding processes allowed the study to identify the frequency of the codes from each category both within and across refugee parent and social service provider transcripts (Saldana, 2009).
Chapter 5. Results

The results section is divided into three parts, by research questions. The first section presents findings to Research Question One, specifically findings from the Burmese refugee parent sample. The second portion reflects findings to Research Question Two, looking at age-related findings, and the third portion presents findings from the social service providers. The results to research question one and three are presented by category of need—noting, in detail, the top three codes for each.

**What are the most prevalent Burmese refugee parent needs, as perceived by Burmese refugee parents?**

The Burmese refugee parent interviews, which lasted an average of 12 minutes each, resulted in a total of 615 coded references across all 32 participants. The transcripts revealed that the interviewer used the interview guides as a structured guide rather than semi-structured as intended, resulting in short responses with no follow-up questions or prompts. In response to Research Question One, “What are the most prevalent Burmese refugee parent needs, as perceived by Burmese refugee parents?” the following sections details the top three identified needs in each category (see Table 3), ranked by the number of participants mentioning the needs.

**Basic needs.** There were a total of 71 “basic need” references made by 31 of the parent and caregiver participants. Only one participant made no mention of basic needs. Within the basic need category “food” was referenced by 23 participants (a total of 23 times) making it the highest ranking basic need. The code, “food” was defined in the codebook as “Access to, adequate, good food; food sources; and food stamps.” Food was referenced as a met need 100% of the time. Statements representing this code mainly acknowledged access to food stamps. For
example, one 22-year-old mother stated, “When we moved to Portland, [Organization Name] helped us with food stamps.”

The second highest ranked need was “housing and utilities,” mentioned by 17 participants a total of 18 times. The code was defined as, “Awareness of and access to affordable, clean, safe housing; electricity; natural gas; water, and sewage.” Statements representing this code ranged from acknowledgement of organizational assistance in acquiring housing to seeking less expensive housing options. All references made to this need were considered met, as illustrated by the following quote from a mother of three, “[Organization Name] …helped us for housing assistance, to be cheaper for house renting”

The third ranked need was “transportation,” which was cited by 14 parent participants a total of 20 times. “Transportation” was defined as “availability of, familiarity with, access to, and understanding of various modes of transportation and their systems.” Eighty-three percent of the references considered ‘transportation’ an unmet need. Some parents referenced not having access to private vehicles, while others referenced not knowing how to use public transportation options. The following quote from a young mother living in a multigenerational home of nine illustrates difficulties around transportation, “Since arriving in the U.S., the most difficult challenges were not knowing how to get around, how to take the busses.”

**Employment.** A total of 21 “employment” references were identified across 17 of the parent interviews. The highest-ranking need for this category was “employment opportunities,” mentioned by 15 of the participants (a total of 15 times). The code was defined as “Availability of work opportunities that provide a livable wage for refugee employees.” One hundred percent of the references considered this as a met need. Mainly, parent statements referenced
organizational assistance in employment. For example, one mother of twins stated,

“[Organization Name] provided us to get jobs.”

The second ranked employment need, referenced by 5 parent participants, was “U.S.
specific job training.” The code was defined as, “Availability of programs that work with
refugees to provide adequate job training for the purposes of acquiring and/or keeping
employment. This includes U.S. standards (i.e., ethics, routines, expectations). This also includes
apprenticeships, internships, and other such on the job trainings.” The need was referenced a
total six times and was considered met 100% of the time. Similar to the abovementioned
‘employment opportunities,’ when parents referenced job training, it was largely acknowledging
the assistance provided by local VOLAGs. The following quote from a 49-year-old widow
illustrates, “[Organization Name] provided the classes, but I didn’t get a job.”

No other employment specific codes were referenced, and therefore there is no third
ranked need.

**Education.** Education was coded a total of 185 times across all 32 refugee parent
participants, making it the most commonly referenced category, overall. This section has three
subcategories: (a) whole-family education, (b) adult education and, (c) child education. Each of
these categories encompassed codes related to the category title. The following three sections
describe the most prevalent needs for each of the aforementioned categories.

**Whole-family education.** A total of 36 “whole-family education” references were found
across 32 participant interviews. “General-family education” emerged as the top need for this
subcategory. The code was defined as, “References to non-specific family inclusive education
opportunities, classes, and in-home family inclusive educational visits” and was referenced by 22
participants a total of 24 times. All participant references considered this need met. Parent
statements that represent this code ranged from whole-family classes offered through VOLAGs to in-home educational opportunities. An example of a statement assigned the “general family education” code is from the perspective of a 66-year-old grandmother, “A teacher from [Organization Name] used to come to our house for our grandchildren’s health and education.”

The second ranked need, ‘family-related coping strategies’ was referenced by 10 participants a total of 11 times and was considered met 82.6% of the time. The codebook definition for the code was, “Whole family strategies for coping with family-related issues.” This code emerged from the interviews based on consistent mentioning of “family problems,” illustrated by the following quote from a 46-year-old father of four, “Family problems were addressed by the programs, for example, if there is a problem between parents and the children.” The term “family problems” was never probed or defined and therefore warrants future investigation.

No other “whole family” specific codes were referenced by this sample.

**Adult education.** There was an aggregate of 98 adult education references identified across 31 participants. Only one participant made no mentioned of adult education needs. The prominence of this code may be because the original interviews were geared toward the evaluation of an adult education course. The highest ranked need for this subcategory was ‘awareness of classes’ and defined as, “Awareness/knowledge of available classes.” The need was mentioned by 28 of the participants a total of 34 times and was considered a met need 72% of the time. Parent statements that represent this code ranged from not having any awareness of adult education opportunities to identifying specific organizations or people who brought educational opportunities to their attention. The following quote demonstrates a 48-year-old
mother’s awareness of available classes through a specific source, “I heard about … classes at [Organization Name]. My job coach told me about it.”

The second ranked need, “U.S. parenting strategy classes” was referenced by 15 participants a total of 29 times, with 69% of the references considering the need unmet. The code was defined as, “Parenting classes that prepare students to parent in a U.S. specific manner, using typical U.S. based parenting strategies.” Statements ranged from acknowledging parenting education classes as contributing to improved parent-social service organization interactions, to an expressed, but obstructed, desire to attend classes. The following quote reflects one 26-year-old mother of two’s interest in a parenting education class, “I am interested in attending [parenting program name] classes because I want to get a lot of knowledge of how to nurture my children and how to take care of them.”

The third ranked need was “life-skills training” and was referenced by 9 participants a total of 16 times. The code was defined as, “Classes or instruction on skills that are necessary or desirable for full participation in everyday life in the U.S., such as using household appliances, how to shop for groceries (EBT/Cash/Debit card), banking, and budgeting.” Seventy-one percent of the references referred to the need as met. Statements coded under this category ranged from parents expressing a need to learn about U.S. tax procedures, to learning about credit. More regularly, however, were references around the use of resources like food stamps. For example, one mother of two shared how a class she attended taught her how to use food stamps, “I’ve got knowledge of…how to do shopping by using food stamps. At first, I didn’t know how to use food stamps when I did shopping, but now I know how to use it.”

**Child education.** Child education was referenced a total of 51 times across 22 participant responses. The highest rated need was, “participation in child’s education” and was mentioned
by 13 participants a total of 23 times, 97% of which considered the need as met. The code was defined as, “Parent participation in child’s school activities including parent-teacher conferences, knowledge of what is being taught, interactions with the school administrators, teachers, and aids. This includes volunteering and attendance of school events.” Some statements described about learning how to participate in their child’s education over time, while others described about their new-found ability to ask for help for their children. The following statement from a mother of four who has lived in Portland for four years and two months illustrates her increased participation in the children’s education that arose after participating in the BPE series, “I used to not say ‘yes’ whatever the teachers said to meet…now I have become confident to deal with the teachers.”

The second ranked need under this subcategory was tied between “knowledge of local schools” and “effective parent-educator communication,” both referenced by 11 participants a total of 14 times each. “Knowledge of local schools” was defined as knowledge of, “Schools location, registration processes, start and finish times, attendance requirements, who to speak with and for what reasons, where to acquire specific school related information, and awareness of school notifications.” Ninety-eight percent of the references considered the need met. Parents often referenced their increased familiarity with school procedures over time, while other parent statements discussed not knowing where to find procedural information. The following quote from a 42-year-old mother living in the U.S. for two years illustrates the process of learning to navigate interactions with local schools, “…my interaction with the schools have improved. I have become understandable about what they mean.”

The codebook definition for, “Effective parent-educator communication” was, “Adequate, effective communication between parents, teachers and other educational staff. This
includes the availability and use of interpreters.” The references considered this as a met need 98.4% of the time. Parent statements ranged from understanding how to properly greet teachers to their comfortability in asking teachers questions. The following quote explains one mother’s positive experience with parent-teacher communication: “I didn’t face any difficulties when dealing with the teachers, they provided interpreting service.”

**Safety and security.** Although I explicitly looked for codes on topics of safety and security within the parent transcripts, none were mentioned.

**Healthcare.** The healthcare category had a total of 23 references made by 13 participants. The healthcare need referenced by the highest number of participants was “reliable health treatment” and was mentioned by six parents a total of seven times. The need was considered met 94.3% of the time. Parent responses ranged from learning about the consequences of second-hand smoke to access to reliable health treatment information. The following example is taken from a single mother of three children who disclosed successfully acquiring mental health treatment in the following quote, “I have had the interactions with [Organization Name]. I had to go there for consulting for my depression.”

“Insurance” and “reliable healthcare information” were ranked as second highest healthcare needs, both mentioned by five participants and both considered met 100% of the time. ‘Insurance’ was defined as “Availability of and access to adequate healthcare insurance for all members of the family.” Participants mentioned the need a total of 5 times. Responses mainly focused on organizations that helped parents’ gain access to health insurance. The following statement from a 31-year old mother demonstrates, “[Organization Name] provided me with food stamps and health insurance.” ‘Reliable healthcare information’ was defined as “Access to and provision of up-to-date, reliable healthcare and healthcare system information, including...
insurance information.” This code was referenced a total of nine times. A 65-year-old parent of two shared the following experience related to learning about the healthcare system, “I have become to know about insurance and the difference between the government and them, such as, health insurance and I have got a lot of knowledge about insurance.”

**Social network.** A total of 14 references were coded to the social network category across 11 interviews. The only code referenced was “informal support” and was mentioned by 11 participants a total of 14 times. The need was considered “met” 76.3% of the time and was defined as, “Unpaid support, guidance, advice, and information provided by friends, neighbors, family, community members, and others in non-official positions.” Parent statements on “informal support” ranged from gaining information from members of their immediate family to members of the larger refugee community. To illustrate, a 22-year-old mother shared the experience of having family members provide transportation, “There are some relative living here. They have their own cars and helped me to go out.”

**Organizations and systems.** Organizations and systems had a total of 16 references made by 12 participants. The highest-ranking code was “effective communication,” mentioned by nine participants a total of 13 times. The need was met 62.7% of the time and was defined as, “Availability of language- and dialect-specific interpreters within any/all agencies dealing with refugees from around the globe.” Parents who referenced the need as unmet where often those who belonged to ethnic groups where Burmese was not the native language. Other statements expressed ease of effective communication based on access to relevant interpreters. For example, in discussing an in-home education visit from a local refugee organization, one 35-year-old mother of two said, “I didn’t face any problems as a teacher who could speak Burmese
accompanied the leader, and Vietnam or Chinese, I can’t remember very well. For the only first time the leader came to our house but mostly the teacher who could speak Burmese came to us.”

There was a two-way tie for second place. “Organization consistency and reliability,” and “interagency collaboration,” were both mentioned by one participant, only one time each. “Organization consistency and reliability” was defined as, “Availability of and access to organizations with consistent, reliable services, assistance, and other refugee specific offerings.” A 66-year-old grandmother shared her experience with a local organization’s inconsistent assistance through the following quote, “A teacher from [Organization Name] used to come to our house for our grandchildren’s health and education. At that time the teacher was pregnant, and after giving birth we haven’t had any interaction with her, but she arranged to send another teacher to us for teaching English to us. Now, that teacher hasn’t come to us for two weeks.”

“Interagency collaboration” was defined as, “Access to and availability of consistent, frequent communication, interactions, and collaborations between agencies working with refugee populations.” The one reference to this code refers to the need as met. A mother of one, living in the U.S. for close to two-years described a helpful interaction between organizations in the following quote, “[Organization Name] helped us to get the contact with [Organization Name].”

**Acculturation.** There were a total of 136 references in the acculturation category, and these references were made by 31 participants. The highest-ranking need within this category was “English proficiency” and was mentioned by 27 participants a total of 33 times. The need was considered unmet 93.1% of the time. The code was defined as the need for, “A level of English language proficiency necessary to support acculturation and integration into the community.” Statements coded under this category included simple declarations of the inability to speak English, acknowledgements around needing to learn English, as well as the issue of
having to request interpreters in lieu of speaking the language. The following quote from a 27-year-old mother of one illustrates having to request interpreters because of low English language proficiency, “The most difficult for me when I started arriving in the U.S. was the language. I had to request interpreters when I had the appointments at the clinics.”

The second ranked acculturation specific code was “knowledge of U.S. parent-child laws and norms” and was mentioned by 20 participants a total of 35 times. The need was considered met 100% of the time, possibly because the interviews focused on refugee parents who had previously enrolled in a parenting education program. Parent statements ranged from learning that ‘beating’ is an inappropriate means of discipline to understanding U.S. laws around a school attendance regulations for children. The following quote demonstrates a 40-year-old mother of two teenagers desire to learn about U.S specific parent-child laws, which she clarifies are different from those in Burma, “I especially wanted to know the laws in the U.S. I know that children who are over 18 years old, free from their parents control, but in my country, our daughters, girls, even though they are married over 18 years old, they are still under their parent’s control. I wanted to know about it.”

The third ranked need for this category was ‘general acculturation’ and was referenced by 18 participants a total of 24 times. The code was defined as needs around “Access and availability of formal instruction (defined as instruction by an instructor/teacher/guide affiliated with an organization in a paid or unpaid position) that provides reliable information on general acculturation topics that aid in settling in.” The need was considered met 88.5% of the time. Responses representing this code largely acknowledged the wide range of differences between life before and after resettlement. The following quote from a 19-year-old caregiver shares how attending a class helped with acculturation, “The class helped me settle into life in the U.S. I
have become to know how to live among different nationalities and how to deal with them properly.”

How Do Refugee Perception of Need Vary Based on Age?

To identify any age-related variance in the perception of needs, participant data were sorted into four age groups, and the average number of coding references was calculated for each category. The four age groups included 19 to 29 year olds \((n = 7)\), 30 – 39 year olds \((n = 10)\), 40 – 49 year olds \((n = 8)\), and individuals aged 50 years or more \((n = 5)\). This resulted in an average number of coded references for each category per age-group (see Table 4). The results indicate education was the most frequently referenced area of need. This is possibly because the original interviews were directed at the evaluation of an adult education program. However, an overall age-related pattern of education-related references emerged. Specifically, references to needs related to education (particularly whole family and adult education) were found to increase with participant age. This was also true of the social network and acculturation categories. In addition, references to needs related to employment were found to decrease with participant age. The following is a breakdown of the most frequent references per category, per age group.

19 – 29. On average, “education” was the category most commonly referenced by this age group \((n = 7)\). The group’s average score for this category was 4.71, meaning participants referenced this code an average of 4.71 times. The break down within the category was as follows, topics around “adult” education had the highest average score (3.57), followed by “child” education (0.71) and “whole family” (0.57). “Acculturation” was, on average, the second most frequently identified need for this age-group (2.43). The third most referenced category was “basic needs” (1.71).
30 – 39. On average, the most frequently referenced category within this age-group \((n = 10)\) was “education.” Participants referenced this code an average of 4.00 times each. Within the education category, needs around “adult” education were most often identified (2.30), with “child” education (1.00) and “whole family” (0.80) following. “Acculturation” was the second highest category to be referenced by this group (2.80). “Basic needs” was, on average, the third most referenced category of needs (2.50).

40 – 49. On average, ‘education’ had the highest number of references (4.63) for this age group \((n = 8)\). Within education, the average scores were as follows: “adult” education (1.75), “whole family” education (1.63), and “child” education (1.38). References to matters on acculturation averaged at 3.75 and “basic need” had an average of 2.13 references, placing them in second and third position respectively.

50+. The overall “education” category had the highest average references (6.20) for this age group \((n = 5)\). Within the education category, “adult education” had the highest average number of references (4.20) followed by “whole family education” (1.40) and “child” education, (1.00). The second most frequently referenced category was “acculturation,” with an average of 4.40 references per participant. The third most referenced category was, “basic needs” with an average of 1.00 reference made per participant.

**What are Burmese Refugee Parent Needs, as Perceived by Social Service Providers?**

To address research question three, “What are Burmese refugee parent needs, as perceived by Social Service Providers,” the following section presents the findings from the 10 social service provider interviews. The interviews, which lasted an average of 67 minutes each, resulted in a total of 947 coded references across all 10 participants. These codes are divided
between needs identified as Burmese specific (200) and those identified as relevant to all refugee groups (747).

The interviewer used interview guides as intended (semi-structured), resulting in long responses with many follow-up questions and prompts based on participant responses. The same codebook, categories, and itemized codes described in the previous sample’s findings were used for this participant group. The following is a breakdown of findings per category, first as it relates to Burmese refugees, followed by the findings for all refugee groups (see Table 3).

**Basic needs**

**Burmese specific basic needs.** There was only one “basic needs” reference made by a social service participant. Within the basic need category only “housing and utilities” was referenced and was viewed as unmet. While providing a list of Burmese specific challenges, the social network participant stated,

Social issues would be the, the first one would be the employment and housing...with the housing issues.... they believe, for example they believe that if they work, the worker going to come and they won’t get HUD, so they don’t want to work.

**All refugee basic needs.** There were a total of 33 “basic need” references across all ten participants. The top need, “money,” was mentioned by 7 participants a total of 17 times. “Money” was viewed as unmet 86.6% of the time. The code “money” was defined as follows, “Earning or acquiring enough money to become or be considered self-sufficient. This includes references to various socio-economic status.” Statements representing this code ranged from an awareness of the systems level need for increased financial support to meet the needs of all refugees, to an acknowledgement of refugees’ need for extended financial assistance. A safety and security participant shared the following concerns associated with refugee populations’ low socio-economic status,
So from a law enforcement perspective, when I deal with immigrant refugee population, specifically refugee populations because of how they got here, my concern is always because there’s usually poverty associated with it….I always worry about people who are disenfranchised, marginalized, without financial power or education, are prime for criminality.

The second highest ranked need for this category was “housing and utilities,” mentioned by six participants a total of 10 times. The need was unmet 58.8% of the time. Provider statements included acknowledgement of Portland’s current housing crisis, gang-infested areas, and needs for the extension of housing resources. For instance, an education representative spoke about a combination of housing challenges refugees face, saying, “And then after 8 months the federal system cuts off your housing, right. And as you all know, housing in Portland is insane.”

The third ranked basic need was “transportation” mentioned by four participants a total of five times. The need was considered unmet 100% of the time. Responses ranged from acknowledging refugees’ inability to navigate public transportation to a lack of access based on geographical location. The following quote from an education representative described transportation as a barrier to attending classes,

And…they don’t have access to go, they don’t have the transportation, a lot of them, that’s what they said…the ability to get themselves to an English class…. sometimes grandparents want to learn English but they don’t have access to it.

Employment.

_Burmese specific employment._ There were three “employment” references made by two of the social service provider participants, specifically representatives from the social network and employment spheres. “Ability to communicate effectively” was referenced by both representatives, once each. The need was considered unmet by both participants. A social network expert outlines why having the ability to communicate effectively is so important for
refugee parents in the following quote, “So, they are not improving any language skills and since they are not improving any language skills they are not getting the jobs or employment.”

The second ranked need, “Employable skills,” was referenced once by a participant from the employment domain. The reference described the need as unmet. The employment specialist, whose position includes assessing employable skills of incoming refugees was asked if many Burmese refugees arrive in the U.S. with high employable skills, the representative said the following:

Not a lot…but the skills that people do come in from Burma are usually coming by way of Malaysia, and in Malaysia they have developed some pretty high skills...in manufacturing….so refugees… that hail from Burma, depending on which campsite they come from are either more skilled or less skilled.

**All refugee employment.** Employment was referenced 34 times by eight of the participants. The highest ranked need was “employment opportunities” and was mentioned by six of the participants a total of 16 times. The need was described as unmet 82.3% of the time. Some providers talked about the influence of incoming refugees’ country of origin on their employable skills and English language proficiency—both of which impact employment opportunities. Other providers discussed how it was the hiring policies and procedures of local businesses that influenced whether refugees had available employment opportunities. For example, an employment representative shared one of the challenges refugees face regarding employment opportunities by saying,

So, the willingness for …employers to hire within refugee communities is there, the follow through is not always there. So we a lot of times have the theoretical willingness and the practical willingness aren’t always connected. Or the HR is willing but the hiring manager of the departments are not as willing. So it’s really hit or miss.

“Credentials” was ranked second, with 5 participants referencing the need a total of 14 times. The need was considered unmet 95% of the time. Participants largely spoke about the
wasted refugee workforce created by restrictive U.S. policies on transnational accreditation. The following employment representative’s explanation of the term “brain waste” demonstrates the problem,

Brain waste is basically refugees with these skills that aren’t being tapped because of all the policies that don’t allow them to get into that [kind of job]. So brain waste is having this pool of people that have significant skills but are working as janitors and Uber drivers usually.

In third place, “U.S. specific job training” was referenced by 4 participants a total of 12 times. The need was viewed as met 69.9% of the time. Responses relevant to this code ranged from needs around non-verbal body language training to needs for training based on previous levels of education and skill. The following employment representative quote outlines the job training protocol refugees undergo,

Eight months is the requirement for the pre-employment training. They can receive the job coaching for up to a year with that same job coach. After one year, there’s another office of refugee resettlement grant that helps them to get employment.

**Education.** Similar to the parent participant sample, “education” was the most frequently referenced category within the social service provider interviews. The overall number of “education” specific references was 143. Of the total references, 28 were specific to Burmese refugees and the remaining 115 spoke of all refugee employment needs. Again, the prominence of these codes is likely due to the original interview guides being geared toward the evaluation of an adult education program. The findings first address Burmese related data by subcategory, namely, whole family, adult, and child education, followed by “All-refugee” findings using all the same subcategories.

**Burmese-specific education.** There were a total of 28 Burmese-specific education references. These referenced were made by 5 participants, with each of the five social service spheres being represented. The overall needs were viewed as unmet 73% of the time.
Burmese specific whole family education needs. Needs related to “whole family education” were referenced five times by five participants. The rank of the top need was “general family education” and was referenced by four participants. General family education was viewed as unmet 100% of the time. Statements representing this code largely focused on needs Burmese refugee families face around conflict management. For example, the following quote from a healthcare representative talking about the need for families to learn conflict management skills in order to deal with family related acculturation conflicts. Although speaking about Burmese families specifically, the representative clarified this need is relevant to all refugees as well,

Understand that we are dealing with the Burmese community, but it’s applicable with the other community [sic]. You know…how parents and families can navigate conflict…like conflict management in the sense around…cultural practices and cultural norms… and understand that….their kids can still hold onto their culture…and hold onto the part of America that is healthy.

The second ranked need, ‘early intervention and family support,’ was identified one time by one safety and security representative. The need was viewed as unmet. The following is a discussion around why early intervention and family support is a need for the Burmese refugee population,

So what we found with Burmese is that, because they, some of them came from camps, refugee camps in Thailand, some from Malaysia, that some of them….their waiting period is much longer to come to the U.S., so it means that some spend their entire adulthood or childhood in a camp, that’s the only social structure they know right? And, we were told they’d been extremely brutalized and oppressed by Malaysian government….and they just don’t have as many, like, tools and skills to succeed here….

Burmese specific adult education. Adult education references were made by two participants a total of 22 times. The top ranked need was “parenting strategy classes,” which was referenced by two participants a total of 10 times. It was coded as unmet 62% of the time. References were largely focused on addressing the differences between parenting in Burma and
the U.S. and therefore did not have a large range of topics. In the following quote, an education representative discusses the need for Burmese parents to learn about U.S. parenting expectations,

…a class in childrearing, that’s a huge one. What’s expected of parents here, you know, in terms of watching after their children and what are common practices here in terms of nutrition and when do you alert that doctor and…that sort of thing.

The second ranked need, “personal education level” was referenced by one participant four times. The need was discussed as unmet 100% of the time. Below, the social network representative discusses the low education levels of Burmese refugees he has worked with,

…there are some literate and preliterate people, yes there is a mix…. I have seen some people with a little bit of education who actually went to high school or colleges in Burma….The people that I have working is 95% preliterate, where they have no education prior.

The third ranked need was, “life-skills training,” referenced three times by one social network participant. The need was viewed as largely met (72.2%). The following statement is an excerpt on the importance of learning certain life-skills in order to successfully integrate into U.S. societies,

The banking and importance of credit, loans and things like [that], because the thing is, if these people are going to live here in this country for the rest of their lives, then they should know at least very basic stuff.

_Burmese specific child education._ This subcategory looks at parents’ needs as related to supporting their children’s education. References to child education specific codes totaled to four, all mentioned by one participant from the social network sphere. No one code outranked the other. The two codes mentioned were “effective parent-teacher communication” and “knowledge of local schools,” both mentioned twice. Needs around parents having “Effective parent-teacher communication” was coded as unmet 60.3% of the time. The following story
demonstrates that, without effective parent-teacher communication, parents rely mainly on their children to inform them of their school activities:

So, children start to go to school, they learn English at schools, …. So, whatever the children have to do at school, the [parent] have no knowledge of them…. They know only through the children. …The public school should have their own translator, not use the children.”

“Knowledge of local schools” was considered unmet 74.6% of the time. The following story demonstrates the level of assistance Burmese parents needed from this social network representative regarding parents’ understanding of their children’s schools, “I would help them understand how to read the reports, how to communicate with the teachers, sometimes I would go there to school with them to do the translations and talk to the teachers.”

All refugee education. Overall, education was referred to 134 times and was mentioned by all 10 participants. The following breakdown provides more detail on the specific subcategories.

All refugee whole family. This subcategory had a total of 48 identified references over 9 of the participant interviews. The highest ranked need was “General family education” referenced by 6 participants a total of 15 times. The need was viewed unmet 79.9% of the time. Statements representing this code ranged from needs for whole families to learn about preventative healthcare strategies to the need to learn about daily U.S. routines that impact the whole family. The following story told by an education representative describes the need for whole family education on U.S. routines:

It’s a very different world…have daily classes in everything…populations that lived by the sunrise and sunset, it’s a little bit of an adjustment for them to understand that they have to get up in the dark and get ready and be at a job….I mean my kids, my students are sometimes late for school, but they’re close by and they’re walking. Sometimes they’ll be twenty minutes late, fifteen minutes late for the first few months and I usually try to find someone who can sit down with them and explain about, in their first language about how it works.
The second ranked need, “community family mentor,” was referenced by four participants a total of 11 times. The need was largely viewed as met (66.3% of the time). Relevant responses spoke about the need for and the mutual benefits of family mentors. The following quote from a social network participant talks about the benefits of family mentors, “We have a mentoring program that we connect each refugee family with a mentor. And they stay involved with them and it’s really mutually beneficial”

“Early intervention and family support” was the third ranked need for this category. It was referenced by three participants a total of 22 times. The need was viewed as unmet 100% of the time. Responses largely expressed the need for early interventions as prevention for potential future challenges. The following story is from a safety and security representative who, in talking about the need for early support for families, shares why the need is perceived as important,

I always go like…when I first meet refugees, they’re all like, in this honeymoon phase right? ‘This is the best country, this is amazing!’ And of course, I’m like, yeah,…I’m not trying to ruin their honeymoon phase, but I’m thinking, ‘let me ask you this in one year, when you realize you can’t keep up with your rent, everything’s so expensive, and this enthusiasm wears off, and you realize that you just cannot manage your life, it’s just overwhelming

All refugee adult education. Adult education was reference a total of 62 times by 9 of the participants. The first ranked need, was “parenting strategy classes” referenced by 7 participants a total of 24 times. The need was viewed as unmet 79% of the time. Statements relevant to the code ranged from acknowledging potential legal consequences associated with foreign parenting practices to discussions around how to design culturally specific programs. The following quote from a healthcare specialist discusses the dilemma of how to teach best parenting practices to refugees,

…What are universal parenting concepts that we can take and build from…parents are just trying to do what’s best for themselves and their children, so it’s like, how do we
help parents to understand what that “best” looks like? How do we, you know, how do we equip them with the tools?”

The second ranked need was “English language classes” and was mentioned by five participants. The need was referenced 12 times and considered unmet 78% of the time. Provider responses ranged between concerns about refugees’ English language proficiency and its impact on employment to using family members, especially children, as interpreters. The following quote from a safety and security representative outlines why parents should be enrolled in English language classes, “…because parents have to 100% rely on children who speak English to help them navigate and access health care, access landlord, access every step of the way.”

In third position, “Personal education level” was reference 10 times by five participants. The references viewed the need as unmet 90.3% of the time. Statements revolved around the impact of low levels of education on employment opportunities and acculturation rates. A safety representative lists personal education levels as a potential inhibiting factor to successful acculturation saying, “…educational background becomes an issue, especially for the parent-aged folks that come over compared to their children...”

All refugee child education. Children’s education needs were referenced a total of 24 times by five of the social service participants. The top need, “Knowledge of local schools” was reference a total of 10 times by four participants. The code was viewed as unmet 92.1% of the time. Provider’s described refugee parents’ familiarity with local schools as a predictor of parental participation in their child’s education. The quote below, provided by a social network representative, discusses how parents’ understanding of school processes impacts their level of participation,

… the whole idea of parent involvement in schools, for some [parents]…there’s not much interference, basically they are entrusting them [children] to the hands of the
schools….Providing [sic] orientation to the parents….at least [an]understanding that as parents you can question, as parents you can see if your child is not going to school…

“Effective parent-teacher communication” was referenced eight times by four participants. The need was coded as unmet in 63.5% of the references. Some provider’s discussed refugee parents’ limited access to school interpreters, while others described the negative outcomes of not having effective parent-teacher communication. Ineffective parent-teacher communication is illustrated through the following story from an education representative,

Oftentimes the parents don’t even know the kid was dropped from the school…And, the news will come when they get a visit from someone…with an interpreter, and the interpreter says, ‘look you will no longer getting these food stamps or whatever…because your teenaged children are no longer registered for school. And they…weren’t even clued into that

The third need “Participation in child’s education” was referenced by four participants a total of five times. The need was considered unmet 100% of the time. Some responses described provider concerns of refugee parents blindly trusting teachers to manage their children’s education. Other providers described their experiences in witnessing refugee parents struggle to actively participate in their children’s education because of their own limited education levels. The impact of limited refugee parent education level is demonstrated in the following story shared by a safety and security representative:

But this couple… they have like 7 children…And [the parents] are really trying so hard to push education but it’s very difficult for them being the ages they are because they don’t have English commands and they’re …really struggling to help their school aged kids do their homework and succeed and be as involved and engaged, so when I did my house visit, I’m like, ‘how’s your daughter doing?’ and she’s like, ‘I just need to find someone who can help her with math.

Safety and security.
Burmese specific safety and security. References specific to needs around “safety and security” totaled eight across four of the participants. The top need, referenced by three participants a total of four times was, “trust in authority.” This code, defined as, “Reliance on and confidence to call upon the person of authority (e.g. police to serve and protect without fear of retribution” was viewed as unmet 71.6% of the time. Participant responses ranged from acknowledging the need for Burmese parents to reshape their image of police to the consequences communities face in light of reduced trust. The following story told by a safety and security representative is an example of a lack of trust in authority by Burmese refugees:

…[Burmese refugees] call for 911, they send cops, they start running, and cops are like, we have no idea what’s going on, let’s go track them down to get something…. It turns out after some time, right, through a language line, they realize it was a bloody medical call, but when they show police, they went into this survival mode, that they fear the police and they ran away….

Needs around “effective communication” ranked second, mentioned by two participants a total of four times. The references considered the needs as unmet 68.1% of the time. A social network representative relayed that, in his experience, disturbance calls have at times been mere misunderstandings, but for Burmese refugees having ineffective means of communication prohibits the ability to clear up the misunderstanding: “…not having the adequate ability to explain what’s going on to the police …the husband got arrested, things like that happened from there.

All refugee safety and security. Overall, the category ‘safety and security’ was referenced 38 times over six participant transcripts. The most common itemized code was, “feeling safe and secure,” and was mentioned by five participants a total of 15 times. The code, defined as “feeling safe/secure in neighborhood and community, feeling protected from danger, risk, or injury” was also largely referenced as unmet (76.7%). Responses ranged from provider
awareness of refugee feelings of safety and security being inhibited by past trauma to concerns about refugee parents’ limited familiarity with common Portland safety concerns (e.g. home invasion) and how to protect against them. An education representative relayed a story of near tragedy that brought attention to the lack of knowledge refugees have on how to achieve a sense of safety and security in their homes,

A couple of years back one of our [girls]…was sleeping in the bed with her grandmother, and a man came through the back window….it was on the ground floor...and when the police investigated they found an old chair underneath … a back window so it wasn’t near a door. And no one walked around that way, no one ever saw it. And they never even thought about it, you know we’re on the ground floor, there’s no screen. They didn’t have any kind of like stick in the window…They moved…to a second story apartment, just for peace of mind. But I showed her how to put a stick in so the window couldn’t be opened.

As the second ranked need, “trust in authority” was referenced by four participants a total of 19 times. The references were largely considered unmet (80.7%). Provider responses largely focused on refugees’ need to reshape their historically based opinions of authority figures. For example, an education representative explained that the impression refugees have of police should be reshaped to match their new surroundings:

It’s really important to have a good relationship with the local police for these groups because you know, sometimes the authority in their lives, maybe a prison guard, has not been a trustworthy person…. So it’s important for them to see the police here as a positive thing, someone who comes to help, but that’s not always how it works out.

The third ranked safety and security need was “effective communication.” The need was mentioned by three participants a total of four times. All the references indicated the need is unmet (100%) and all responses expressed concerns around the impacts of miscommunication between refugees and police. For example, a safety representative shared the challenges both refugees and police face during disturbance calls in the face of ineffective communication,

State law requires if we are at the scene of domestic violence it is mandatory arrest … … often times what happens is they [wives] call 911, they want the violence to stop…but
they don’t necessarily want their husband to go to jail…we don’t have a choice in the matter, so we arrest them and … then hopefully there’s the explanation of, ‘your husband will be back’ usually, unless it’s a weekend, ‘within 24 hours. He’ll be here’…but again, if they don’t speak the language, it doesn’t really help you a lot.

Healthcare.

_Burmese specific healthcare_. Three healthcare references were found within two participant transcripts. The top ranked need for this category was ‘reliable healthcare information’ and was referenced by two participants. The references considered the need 100% unmet. An education representative shared the following story that illustrates this code and describes students needing guidance and reliable healthcare information based on their families’ challenges:

> The only groups that…have actually come and talked to me about alcohol or drug abuse in their family have been from the Burmese…. there’s been several students who have come to me, and, after they’ve been out of my class maybe a year or two and they can really express themselves… they have come and said, ‘you know my father is drinking every day, and he is different, he’s not my father’….I don’t chalk that up to they’re more susceptible to alcoholism or drug abuse. I think it’s depression.

The second ranked need was “effective communication,” although it was only referenced by one participant one time. The need was deemed unmet. The following story shared by an employer illustrates the ability to garner reliable information through effective communication, which the refugee employee was lacking:

> You know we had a situation where one of our employees, you know, didn’t know that he could be connected with the Burmese language translations services for his healthcare, and we did a little bit of research and were able to set up a phone call and solved a lot of problems very quickly.

_All refugee healthcare_. Healthcare needs were referenced 40 times over five of the participants. The code referenced by the most participants (five participants, six times) was, “healthcare treatment.” The references viewed the need as closely split between met (51.3%) and unmet (48.6%). Provider responses included acknowledgement of U.S. efforts to provide
healthcare to refugees and their understanding of the importance for incoming refugees to have access to healthcare. The following quote by a healthcare representative concisely explains the need: “Access to healthcare and health literacy is essential to successful integration”

The second ranking healthcare need was “reliable healthcare information” and was referenced by four participants a total of 22 times. The majority of these coded references (76.9%) were viewed as unmet. Provider responses were largely focused on the negative consequences of misinformation, not only on the refugee communities, but on the larger national community. One healthcare representative shared the following story portraying the negative consequences of misinformation being disseminated through refugee communities:

You saw what happened in Minnesota with the Somali folks not wanting to get their kids vaccinated because they thought it would cause autism, and then we had a measles outbreak...we don’t have measles outbreaks anymore....I know it was misinformation that was being spread throughout this population.

The third ranked need was around “awareness of healthcare policies” and was referenced by three participants a total of eight times. The references were considered unmet 57.3% of the time. One employment representative shared views on the current pressing need for refugee guidance on healthcare policies:

…the president of the United States is throwing healthcare markets into turmoil. Refugees may need more assistance navigating healthcare markets than even before.

Social network.

Burmese specific social network. There were 21 social network category references coded across six of the participants. The top need, “sense of community belonging,” was defined as “Being a part of, welcomed by, and having access to the larger Portland community, the smaller refugee community, and to one’s own similar ethnic group” and was referenced by four participants, 17 times. Statements related to this code ranged from concerns about Burmese...
refugees’ detachment from the larger Portland community to the continuation of historically based ethnic segregation. Eighty percent of the references were coded as unmet needs. The following is a quote from a safety and security representative that illustrates Burmese refugees’ needs around a sense of belonging to the larger Portland community:

…these communities are still very isolated, and what I mean by that is that …there’s that strong cohesion because of their shared experiences. And so, because of that, they’re kind of in the community but they’re separate from the community.…

The following story is included to illustrate the need for refugees to feel a sense of belonging in their own ethnic groups. The quote is provided by an employment representative and demonstrates the need as unmet.

I’d say that the various ethnic groups there is no really combined community group…you know there was a soccer tournament recently that was a Burmese soccer tournament and each of the ethnic groups had their soccer teams, and it did create some strife. Especially with the Muslim Burmese, and the Rohingya which are separate ethnic groups but same religious groups…. And then in the schools, the kids you know are in the same classes together, but they don’t, because of the divide within the ethnic groups …, there just doesn’t seem to be a coming together.

The second ranked need for this category was “informal support” and was mentioned by three of the participants four times. The statements viewed the needs as unmet 63.1% of the time. Provider responses ranged from acknowledging the need for increased “informal supports” to recognizing religious sanctuaries as “informal support” options. One social network representative shared how separate religious groups can often rely on religious organizations to provide informal support:

I think a lot of the communities do have [informal support], like the Bhutanese communities, or the Burmese, … they have their churches. The ones that are Buddhist, they have their temples. The Muslims have the Mosques.

There were no other codes referenced under this category.
All refugee social network. The social network category had a total of 70 coded references over all ten of the participants. The top emerging need was around “informal support” and was described in eight of the participant interviews a total of 32 times. The references largely viewed the needs as unmet (51.3%). Responses ranged from believing refugee communities are good at providing informal support to concerns around those who lack strong informal support. An employment representative emphasized the importance of informal support as illustrated by the following quote, “…the best resources for refugees will most often come from other members of their community who have previously immigrated to the United States.”

The second ranking need for this category was, “sense of community belonging” and was referenced by seven of the participants a total of 37 times. Eighty percent of the references considered the need unmet. Some responses acknowledged that refugees could experience an increased sense of belonging if, at a systems level, there were a recognition of culture. Other responses discussed the vital role “informal supports” like churches, community members, and ethnic group leaders play in creating a sense of belonging for incoming refugees. The following quote from a safety and security representative explains some of the consequences of resettled refugees not having a sense of belonging to the larger Portland community,

Portland … [refugees] lack civic engagement, they lack the process of knowing how to ask and how to demand, for enhanced services, for better response, for just more equality city wide….And because of that…. we found ourselves on like third generation of immigrants that have missed that opportunity to integrate timely….

The third ranked need was “effective communication” and was referenced by one participant once. The need was considered unmet 100% of the time. The following quote from a safety representative is in response to a question about where officers find translators,

Well, you know, sometimes it’s from the community….there’ll be somebody who does, and oftentimes we try to avoid if when we can, it’s the children. And we don’t like to use
children, especially in criminal event pieces, but… young adults who have been Americanized for quite some time, you know we use those.

**Organizations and systems.**

**Burmese specific organizations and systems.** Fifty-one Burmese specific references were coded under the category of “organizations and systems” across seven of the participants. The highest ranked code was, “culturally aware and sensitive personnel and procedures” coded 21 times from five participant interviews. The needs around this topic were largely viewed as unmet (79.2%). Statements relevant to this code ranged from concerns around Burmese refugees feeling misunderstood based on culturally insensitive personnel and procedures to potential legal repercussions Burmese parents face in light of misunderstandings, such as accusations of child abuse, based on culturally uninformed service providers. To demonstrate the types of references coded, the following is a quote from the social network sphere illustrating why refugees need culturally aware and sensitive personnel and procedures in the classroom in particular,

> So a person who has never been in the classroom for his or her whole life, or let’s say forty years and then suddenly they have to go into the classroom and sit for like two hours and listen to someone speaking a different language. It’s not that helpful. I tried to talk to [organization name]. The way that they teach ESL programs, but they tend not to acknowledge my suggestions.

The second ranked need was “interagency collaboration,” found in four participant interviews 11 times. The needs were viewed 79.2% of the time as unmet. Statements relevant to this code varied between concerns of refugees receiving duplicated services to concerns of refugees missing resettlement services based on limited interagency collaborations. This statement made by a social network illustrates the lack of interagency collaboration,

> To be honest [Organization Name] does not really work with the police force. I don’t know why. I tried to have the police try to work with [Organization Name]. They did not really want to work with them…. They’re not like really involved-involved. Not like completely not working either, it’s just not like, like really involved with the police department. And they work with the communities
In third position was “connection to refugee community,” which was mentioned by four participants a total of nine times. The needs were discussed as unmet 59% of the time. Provider responses relevant to this code largely focused on resulting detachment between organizations and Burmese refugee communities. The following story shared by a safety and security representative shows the challenges refugees and police face by not having established connections between the groups,

Quite honestly, I think the main concern that I have is that because, again, of the kind of siloed and closed off group, we won’t be aware of crime trends that are happening and victimization that is happening until it’s either entrenched or too late. That’s my biggest concern with [the Burmese].

All refugee organizations and systems. There were a total of 111 coded references over all ten of the participants. The highest ranked code was overwhelmingly “culturally aware and sensitive personnel and procedures,” which was mentioned 44 times across all by 10 participants. The references viewed needs around the topic as unmet 83.1% of the time. Some provider responses reported the need for organization personnel to know the legal differences between refugees, asylees, and immigrants in order to provide accurate and relevant resources. Other providers discussed concerns around healthcare issues, such as the misdiagnosis of culture-bound syndromes, resulting from the limited cultural awareness of personnel. The following reference from a healthcare representative gives an example of why refugees need organizations and systems to be culturally informed, in this case as it relates to healthcare,

Neurasthenia is a condition that only exists in China….its one of those culture bound syndromes. And so what’s interesting is most of the symptoms for Neurasthenia – it’s a psychological or psychiatric health issue but the symptoms are actually mostly somatic. So things like feeling tired or…having muscle aches and things like that….we found in the work that we did there are a lot of other cultures, non-western cultures [where] psychiatric disorders…are expressed somatically. So people won’t say I feel sad, they will say I feel tired, or feel…run down, or I feel like I have no appetite.
The second most frequently referenced code was “connection to refugee community,” referenced by nine participants a total of 23 times. This code was unmet 74.8% of the time. Responses included a need for organizations to know the various community leaders for efficiency of dissemination of information and, similar to Burmese specific codes, providers included examples of how intra-group connections could impact employment opportunities. For example, a representative from the employment sphere explained how, for members of the refugee community, having connections within the refugee community was important for employment purposes: “Having connections is just as equally important. Knowing what jobs they can apply for. It’s who you know not what you know right. So it’s the same principle even for refugees.”

The third ranked need was around the topic of “interagency collaboration” and was referenced by eight participants a total of 25 times. The need was viewed as unmet 57% of the time. Responses ranged from the impact of interagency collaboration on the dissemination of reliable healthcare information to the missed resettlement services and opportunities refugee families experience based on limited communication between agencies. The following story from a safety and security representative tells of a refugee boy’s legal downfall and illustrates why the need for interagency collaboration is vital to refugees’ integration process,

…3 years ago when we had this opportunity, and we didn’t as a society or agency intervene and get on board and get all these resources and teachers and parents and principle and psychologist to help build some safety networks and resource networks for this kid, and now he’s doing prison time for armed robbery.

**Acculturation.**

**Burmese specific acculturation.** Acculturation was referenced 82 times across seven of the participants. The top ranked need was ‘orientation to U.S. customs and norms’ which was referenced by four participants, a total of 10 times. Ninety-five percent of the time it was
referenced as an unmet need. Responses relevant to this code were largely related to the vast differences between U.S. and Burmese culture. Provider responses discussed challenges Burmese parents face regarding daily routines, educational processes, and inter-personal interactions. The following story demonstrates a typical Burmese problem solving strategy that is contrary to expected U.S. problem solving methods—illustrating why there is a need for Burmese refugees to become oriented with U.S. customs and norms,

Problem solving. When we try to resolve the problem, we [Burmese] tend to talk straight forward to the face….we don’t do the abstract theories. …So that’s very hard for them to do. Like, if they wanted to say something, they [Burmese] just scream their head off and that’s it.

Second ranked need was “support for acculturation gap,” with four participants mentioning it a total of nine times. The need was viewed as unmet 90.6 % of the time. Providers offered similar stories of Burmese parents exhibiting fear around disciplining their children for fear of legal consequences. The following story shared by a representative from the safety and security sphere shows why there is a need for support around the different acculturation rates Burmese families experience,

What I have heard consistently, across the board, is as children become more astute and more Americanized and more aware of the system, what is a very common thing is they have a phone for instance, and the family says you’re grounded, we’re taking your phone away, you know we’re punishing you, we’re taking these things away. They will say, I’m gonna call the police on you and say that you beat me.

Ranked third was “English language proficiency,” which was referenced by three participants a total of 11 times. The code was discussed as unmet 83.5% of the time. All provider’s statements acknowledged the significance of English to employment and acculturation challenges. The following quote from a social service representative highlights the challenges associated with the Burmese population’s low rates of language proficiency as it relates to employment:
Adults, so they were not improving any language skills and since they are not improving any language skills they are not getting the jobs or employment…. …the main issue is the language barrier….that’s really what frustrates them. Is that they cannot communicate to, and it is totally understandable.

**All refugee acculturation.** The category of acculturation for all refugees had a total of 267 codes spanning all ten participant interviews. The top-ranking need emerged as “English proficiency,” with 34 references made by 10 participants. The need was considered unmet 86% of the time. Similar to Burmese specific codes, providers recognized limited English proficiency as impacting employment opportunities and acculturation conflicts. An employment representative was asked whether he felt a refugees’ country of origin impacted acculturation rates and how. The representative responded as follows:

Well yes I do because [some] areas have more exposure to English language and…this is the unfortunate consequences of colonization, there’s some parts of the world where refugee community come from where English is frequently spoken and there are part so the world where its not spoken at all. So one of the refugees that work at [Organization Name] is from Iraq and his English is quite good, and he is fully functional kind of….We have other employees from Myanmar and English is not spoken very much at all there. And so language has been a more significant barrier for them.

“General acculturation” was the second ranked code. It was referenced by nine participants a total of 38 times. Provider responses discussed how refugees need to become familiar with U.S. practices around transportation, educational processes, and, how these acculturation needs began early in the process. The following story shows that acculturation needs are vast and, for refugees, the acculturation process begins upon leaving the refugee camps:

It’s not just about the language, it’s kind of adjusting, acclimating to such a busy place. …A lot of those refugees their first time in a car was the bus to the airport. And, some of them even get sick when they come here and they get off the plane…. the resettlement agencies are very aware….to keep the car rides real short.

The third ranked need, “consistent, reliable continued education,” was referenced by eight participants a total of 22 times. The need was viewed as unmet 87.1% of the time. Provider
responses ranged from acknowledgment of existing parent educational opportunities to acknowledgment of the lack of continued educational opportunities, both for parents and organizational personnel. The following quote from an education specialist explains why there is a need for continued education options for parents:

…kids are going to school and they’re immersed in English five days a week. …But the adults don’t have that. And so, they’re going to [Organization Name], I don’t know how often they go into English class, but I think having more classes for the adults, for one thing, will give them an education, they’ll you know, they’ll get used to getting up, getting on the bus, going to a place all day, coming home, fixing dinner, you know, the routine of life.
Chapter 6. Discussion

The objective of this study was to identify the needs of Burmese refugee parents living in Portland, Oregon. Although I use the all-encompassing term, “Burmese,” this term does not accurately reflect the ethnic diversity of Burma or this study’s participants. However, based on the scarcity of literature on this group’s needs, at a country of origin level, the first step is to identify whether the needs of refugee parents from Burma are distinguishable from refugee parents from other countries. To accomplish this goal, the study explored both the self-identified needs of Burmese refugee parents as well as their needs as perceived by Portland-based social service providers. Specifically, this study asked three questions: (a) What are the most prevalent Burmese refugee needs as perceived by the Burmese refugees? (b) Do these perceived needs vary based on refugee participant age? and (c) What are the most prevalent Burmese refugee needs as perceived by Portland based social service providers. This section discusses the main findings for each research question of the study.

What are the Most Prevalent Burmese Refugee Needs as Perceived by the Burmese Refugees?

The Burmese refugee parent interview data were limited but provided valuable insight to identifying the most prevalent needs of this vulnerable population. This study designated prevalence based, first, on the number of referencing participants and, second, on the number of references coded. It is important to note that results would have differed slightly had I prioritized the number of identified codes over the number of participant endorsements, but the parent sample’s data would have remained limited. Regardless, these limited data were not entirely unexpected given participants’ limited time in this country, the preferred arrangement of parent and caregiver interviews (e.g., the use of a Burmese interviewer only), and the influence of the
Oppressive environment in which they developed, as suggested by the life course principle historical time and place. Regardless of these limitations, interviews revealed several important findings. For a comprehensive list of findings see Table 5. The following section discusses only the most prevalent identified needs from this sample.

Overall, the most prominent needs identified in the data were directed at how parents could ensure the well-being of their families. This communal outlook aligns with research that identifies the Burmese people as largely collectivistic (Hofstede et al., 2010). Specifically, parents used family-inclusive terms like “we,” “us,” and “family” when discussing educational opportunities. Parents also used the term ‘family problems’ while talking about needs around education. The term ‘family problems’ was not explicitly defined by the sample but used frequently enough to warrant attention from organizations working with Burmese parents and families.

Parenting education, more specifically classes on U.S. specific parenting strategies and U.S. parent-child laws were also identified as prominent needs. The prominence of these needs may be biased based on the design of the original interview guides that were created for a related study evaluating the BPE series. However, the findings align with research that suggests the resettlement challenges for parents from disparate cultures include stress around adapting to new parenting rules and expectations (Tajmia & Harachi, 2010). The findings of this study, therefore, support the continuation of parenting education programs for incoming and current refugee populations.

Participants also identified English language proficiency as a top contending need. This finding aligns with acculturation research which states that successful integration is highly dependent on the ability to speak English (Agbényiga, Barrie, Djelaj, & Nawyn, 2012). Parents
linked language proficiency with the ability to communicate effectively with adult education teachers as well as their ability to participate in their children’s education.

Parent participation in their children’s education was another prominent need. Parents with school-aged children acknowledged the need to interact with educators and how, with guidance, their confidence in interacting with school officials had improved over time. However, the number of parents who discussed participation in their children’s education was lower than expected. This possibly aligns with research that indicates Burmese defer to teachers as the trusted authority not to be questioned (Maung, 1964; Skidmore & Wilson, 2008).

Also among the main findings for this sample were references to basic needs. Within the category, parents most often spoke about food in relation to having access to food stamps. No participants spoke about food as a deficit. This is unsurprising, as the U.S. government guarantees those with refugee status access to the same income related resources as U.S. citizens. The same does not apply to housing and transportation, however. Although housing costs are initially supplemented by the government, after eight-months refugees are expected to pay their own housing costs. As such, parents spoke about the need to find cheaper housing. Finally, parents only discussed transportation as a deficit. Parents indicated that they struggle with understanding how to maneuver around the city, which often prevents them from participating in educational opportunities.

Although not a prominent need, it is also important to note the lack of references related to topics on safety and security within this sample. Although the lack of references places this category in last place on this study’s scale of significance, the scarcity of references indicates that organizations working with Burmese refugees may wish to ensure refugees are fully informed about potential needs and resources in this area.
Overall, these family oriented findings are encouraging when we consider the principle of linked lives at the family relationship level. The actions and experiences of the parents will ultimately play a role in the provision of life opportunities for their children. Not only are parents, who are seeking to improve family dynamics, modelling pro-active behavior, but they are also laying the foundation of future opportunities for their children. The outcomes of children will benefit from supportive parenting practices, parental participation in the children’s education, and lower stress levels resulting from having basic needs met.

**Do These Perceived Needs Vary Based on Refugee Participant Age?**

According to the life course perspective, the age at which events like resettlement occur impacts lived experiences and developmental outcomes (see also Lerner, Schwartz, & Phelps, 2009). For example, there are clear differences in the lived experiences and needs between children and adult refugees. This study sought to identify differences of perceived needs based on the caregivers’ ages.

Based on the various age groups’ average number of references, findings revealed the oldest participant group (50+) had a higher average number of needs in three specific areas as compared to their younger counterparts. The areas of interest include: (a) acculturation, (b) adult education, and (c) social network.

The group’s higher average number of acculturation related references may reflect their desire to address differing acculturation rates within the household. This is especially probable considering the average age of the youngest household member for this age group was 14 years old. This finding aligns with research that indicates acculturation conflicts increase in homes with adolescent family members (Birman, 2006).
Keeping in mind the average age of the youngest household member for this age group, the higher number of coded references pertaining to adult education may reflect the group’s consciousness of their own limited education as compared to that of their children. Moreover, this finding aligns with research that suggests education is the primary reason most refugee parents opt for resettlement (Mitschke et al., 2011; Skidmore & Wilson, 2008).

Finally, the 50+ age group had more average references related to the topic of social networks than did the other age groups. More specifically, their references related to the topic of informal support. As above, this finding aligns with previous research. Acculturation research suggests older refugees are at risk of inhibited acculturation and negative mental health outcomes due to higher levels of loneliness and isolation (Strong, Varady, Chahda, Coody, & Burnham, 2015).

These findings suggest refugee organizations should create programs or other educational opportunities for Burmese refugees aged 50 and older on the topics around acculturation, adult education, and building social networks. Future studies could work to identify more-specific topics related to each category should be further explored in future studies.

**Burmese Refugee Needs as Perceived by Social Service Providers**

Although provider interviews were significantly longer and more detailed than the refugee parent sample, their ability to speak specifically to the needs of Burmese refugee parents was limited. Providers struggled to separate the needs of all refugees from those specific to Burmese parents (see Table 3). This emerging finding implies that the Burmese refugee community may fly, largely, under the radar of social service providers. This finding is concerning given that research supports the idea, supported by the life course principle linked
lives, that providers often bridge the support deficiency gap for refugee parents from Burma (McLaughlin & Guilfoyle, 2013).

Interestingly, the aforementioned finding of detachment between providers and Burmese parents was a prevalent theme across many of the Burmese refugee needs identified by this sample. One example closely aligned with the concept of detachment is the perceived need for Burmese refugee parents to feel a “sense of community belonging.” Many of the social service providers indicated Burmese refugees tend to remain isolated within their communities. Providers used descriptive terms like “siloed,” or “closed-off” while discussing the community. As one participant said, “…they’re kind of in the community but they’re separate from the community.”

Additionally, providers identified “connection to refugee community” as a top contending need for Burmese refugees, further corroborating the feeling of detachment. Provider concerns around community connection were two-fold. First, providers spoke of disconnection between the various Burmese ethnic groups based on residue from historical events. This in-group disconnection impacts opportunities associated with strong social networks such as informal supports, word-of-mouth employment opportunities, and general social interactions. Second, providers expressed concerns over disconnection between service providers and Burmese communities. This level of disconnection impacts providers’ ability to disseminate reliable information, offer support and preventative services, and provide protection to the community. Without these resources, Burmese refugees are vulnerable to misinformation and victimization.

Moreover, providers unknowingly recognized the power of historical time and place by identifying the need for organization and system representatives to increase culturally sensitive
personnel and procedures to reduce, in part, the overall sense of disconnection. Restricted access
to culturally informative resources acts as a barrier to meeting refugee needs. For example,
without cultural training, service providers might minimize culture-bound roles, misunderstand
coping strategies, and misdiagnose symptoms. As one law enforcement participant put it, “if you
apply culture, whether it’s the language or knowledge or knowing the nuances of how to
communicate with people, guess what? You don’t have to point you weapon…and you gain so
much more.”

Furthermore, this sense of disconnection is also felt in the perceived needs around
Burmese trust in authority. Specifically, provider transcripts indicate Burmese refugees have a
diminished trust in authority, particularly trust in the police. Police representatives allege they
rarely have to respond to calls from the Burmese community but worry this is due to
underreporting of crime. This concern is likely to be valid given the Burmese community’s
traumatic history and reported fear of authority

Outside of this sense of disconnection, providers identified topics related to
‘acculturation’ and ‘whole family education’ as further prominent categories of need.
Specifically, with regards to acculturation, providers spoke of the need for family support around
conflicts that arise because of differing acculturation rates between parents and their children.
This was closely tied to ‘whole family’ needs for early intervention and support for incoming
refugee families.

**How do the needs compare between the two groups?** The findings highlighted some
notable similarities and differences between the two samples’ data. Comparably, both samples
had little to say about Burmese refugee parent needs. In fact, the provider interviews, which were
considerably longer than the parent interviews, had fewer references to Burmese refugee parent
needs than did the refugee parent interviews. Also, the two participant groups identified similar needs related to ‘whole family education’ and ‘acculturation.’ Both groups’ transcripts revealed Burmese refugee parent needs for support to combat family conflicts—many of which were directly related to differing acculturation rates.

The participant groups also spoke about needs from very different perspectives, however. Burmese parents often expressed their needs as met, whereas service providers identified Burmese refugee parents’ unmet needs. Parents’ expression of needs as met may be due to their inability to understand fully what their needs are this early into their resettlement. Provider perspectives on needs as largely unmet may reflect their deeper understanding of the current U.S. landscape and what is required to thrive in the community.

Second, parents spoke from a practical standpoint while service providers took a more abstract perspective on needs. Specifically, parent transcripts focused on concrete needs like food, transportation, housing, school interactions, and English language classes. Conversely, service providers focused on less tangible needs. For example, providers identified needs for feelings of belonging, connection, and trust. These differences of perspective are somewhat reflective of their position in Maslow’s hierarchy of needs. Parents are seeking to satisfy their basic, lower level needs. Whereas, providers, whose own basic lower level needs are met can focus on the future higher level, ‘self-actualization’ needs of Burmese refugee parents (Maslow, 1943, 1954). Moreover, even though participant findings were restricted to the same 10 overarching categories of need, findings suggest the most prominent needs identified by each group were almost perfectly reversed.
Strengths, Future Directions, and Limitations

Based on limited research on the topic of Burmese refugee parent needs, this exploratory study stands as a foundation for future research. Currently, U.S. policy, and thus refugee specific organizations, view refugees as one homogenous group. As such, the influence of country specific historical events on the developmental outcomes of unique refugee groups is lost. Therefore, refugees are offered the same resettlement resources, regardless of actual need. The findings of this study indicate the first step in addressing incoming refugee needs is for U.S. policy to acknowledge the differences between groups based on their country of origin, as supported by theory. Therefore, while it is not ideal to group the various Burma specific ethnic groups together, especially considering the continued inter-ethnic conflict among resettled Burmese groups, this is the first step in more efficiently addressing needs based on the principle of historical time and place.

Future research may want to focus on the needs of specific refugee ethnic-groups, with significant attention paid to the role of trauma relative to each group. This is an important step because, as demonstrated in this study, many refugee families from Burma belong to ethnic groups not formally recognized by their country of origin. By continuing to ignore ethnic and cultural specificity we risk inadvertently overlooking needs of certain groups from Burma that may arise as a result of lingering intergroup practices of discrimination.

One limitation of this study was the summation, rather than verbatim translation, of refugee transcripts. By summarizing the interviews, nuanced meanings were lost. Another limitation was the small service provider sample size which is not representative of all services provided to refugee parents from Burma.
Chapter 7. Conclusion

Overall, the findings of this study highlight the fact that Burmese refugee parents and social service providers view the needs of the Burmese refugee community differently. Most notable are differences between the relative importance of what refugees need in theory versus in practice. Given the restricted time allotted to resettlement assistance, it is important for the design of resettlement programs to incorporate the perception of needs from both those in need and those providing the needs in order to create more holistic, targeted programs. The findings from this study have implications for programs and policies at both the community and national levels.

Community Implications

**Context matters.** Refugees from Burma enter the U.S. with well-established meanings and values attributed to roles, relationships, religious beliefs, moral codes, and even words or terms based on their historical backgrounds. However, these meanings and associated values differ outside of the Burmese context, and the learning curve for refugee families is steep. To create more balance in the process of resettlement, there needs to be further exploration of what the Burmese community deems important, and why.

**Age matters.** Findings from this study suggest older Burmese parents have higher interests in issues that research supports are potential risk factors. Resettlement programs should use findings from this study to delve further into categories of interest to better identify specific class topics. The subsequent offerings should keep time and locations convenient based on the different age ranges.

**Bridging the gap.** It is the responsibility of social service organizations, personnel, and community members to address the issue of detachment implied by the findings of this study—
especially with respect to new arrivals. Beyond the current efforts, of which there are many, apprenticeships, internships, and mentoring programs are a few suggested solutions. Through these outreach programs, organizations can build community connections and trust while dispelling prevalent myths and correcting misinformation.

**Cultural competency.** The findings of the study indicate that social service providers are aware of the need for increased in-house cultural competency. Organizations need easily accessible and culturally informative resources. These resources should be made available to all social service providers who work with refugee communities, as well as to businesses that employ refugees. Not only does this have the potential to decrease feelings of disconnection, but it also provides organizations with resources to create a supportive, welcoming environment.

**Interagency collaboration.** Given the restricted time allotted to resettlement assistance, resettlement programs need to be precise, targeted, and efficient. Interagency collaboration is one way in which to achieve these standards. Furthermore, interagency collaboration has the potential to reduce any duplication of services.

**National Implications**

**Resources.** Findings suggest that where a refugee is from will strongly impact their needs and their acculturation rate. The needs for refugee parents from Burma, who often have low education and few employable skills, will be different from refugees from countries where education and employable skills were more readily available. At a national level, this means closely examining the policies and culture of the countries of refugee origin and determining baseline resource allocation on the findings.

**Attitudes.** Without the input of research in the design of policy, it is the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors of policy-makers that ultimately shape the culture of the land. Current attitudes,
beliefs, and behaviors are negatively impacting the lived experiences of refugees, organizations that work with refugees, and the communities at large. Policy-makers should rely more heavily on unbiased research in the design of policy that more accurately reflects reality and thus prevents the dissemination of misinformation.

This study emphasizes the fact that merging groups from dissimilar contexts, like refugees from Burma and U.S. populations, requires a different set of resources as compared to merging groups with similar ideals. As such, it is important to consider the perceptions of need from both groups when decided which resources are most relevant to the resettlement process. Group insight’s highlight similarities and differences between the two, thus identifying areas of greatest need.
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<td></td>
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</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>19 - 66</td>
</tr>
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<td>Number of children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>1 - 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time in the U.S. (months)</td>
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Table 2. Social Service Provider Demographic Characteristics \((N = 10)\)

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<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<td>50%</td>
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<tr>
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<td>50%</td>
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<td>Burmese</td>
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<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afghani</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African/Liberian</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field experience (years)</td>
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Table 3. *Number of References to Burmese and Other Refugee Needs in Burmese Refugee and Service Providers’ Interviews*

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<th>Category of Needs</th>
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<th>Service Providers (N = 10)</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burmese Needs</td>
<td>Burmese Needs All Refugee Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n References (n)</td>
<td>n References n References (n)</td>
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<td>Basic Needs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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<td>5 31 10 134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole family</td>
<td>32 35</td>
<td>5 5 9 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult</td>
<td>31 98</td>
<td>2 22 9 62</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child</td>
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<td>1 4 5 24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and security</td>
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<td>4 8 6 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healthcare</td>
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<td>2 3 5 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social network</td>
<td>11 14</td>
<td>6 21 10 70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizations and systems</td>
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<td>7 51 10 111</td>
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Table 4. *Average Number and Percentage of References to Burmese Needs by Parents per Age Group (N=32)*

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<td>19-29 (n=7)</td>
<td>30-39 (n=10)</td>
<td>40-49 (n=8)</td>
<td>50+ (n=5)</td>
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<td>% children under 5</td>
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<td>52.9%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
<td>5.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average age of youngest child (years)</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>10.1</td>
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<td>Basic Needs</td>
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<td>2.13 100.0%</td>
<td>1.00 80.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>0.86 57.0%</td>
<td>0.80 70.0%</td>
<td>0.50 50.0%</td>
<td>0.20 20.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4.71 100.0%</td>
<td>4.00 100.0%</td>
<td>4.63 100.0%</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole Family</td>
<td>0.57 42.8%</td>
<td>0.80 80.0%</td>
<td>1.63 87.5%</td>
<td>1.40 100.0%</td>
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<td>Adult</td>
<td>3.57 85.7%</td>
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<td>1.75 100.0%</td>
<td>4.20 100.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Child</td>
<td>0.71 42.8%</td>
<td>1.00 70.0%</td>
<td>1.38 75.0%</td>
<td>1.00 80.0%</td>
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<td>Safety &amp; security</td>
<td>0.00 0.0%</td>
<td>0.00 0.0%</td>
<td>0.00 0.0%</td>
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<td>Healthcare</td>
<td>0.57 42.8%</td>
<td>0.90 50.0%</td>
<td>0.13 12.5%</td>
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<td>Social Network</td>
<td>0.14 14.2%</td>
<td>0.40 40.0%</td>
<td>0.50 37.5%</td>
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<td>Organization &amp; systems</td>
<td>0.43 42.8%</td>
<td>0.70 40.0%</td>
<td>0.38 25.0%</td>
<td>0.40 40.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acculturation</td>
<td>2.43 100.0%</td>
<td>2.80 90.0%</td>
<td>3.75 100.0%</td>
<td>4.40 100.0%</td>
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Table 5. Ranking of Burmese and Other Refugee Needs per Burmese Refugee and Service Providers’ Interviews by Number of Participant Endorsements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Burmese Refugees (N = 32)</th>
<th>Service Providers (N = 10)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Category</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>Burmese Specific</td>
<td>All Refugees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Whole family edu</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Organizations &amp; systems</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Acculturation</td>
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<td>Adult education</td>
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<td>Social network</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Basic needs</td>
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<td>Child education</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
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<td>Adult education</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Organization &amp; systems</td>
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<td>Healthcare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Social network</td>
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<td>Basic</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Safety &amp; security</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Child education</td>
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</table>
Appendix A

PARENT AND CAREGIVER (NON-PARTICIPANT) INTERVIEW

We are here today as part of a research study aimed at understanding the experiences of Burmese parents and caregivers living in Portland. You should have received a phone call or personal visit from an IRCO representative about the study but just to review, we’re here to conduct an interview that will last between 30-45 minutes. My name is XXX and I will be asking you some questions today.

I will be asking for your insights about two general areas:
1. Your experiences settling in the United States.
2. Information you have learned from parents and caregivers who have taken parenting education in the U.S.

As we proceed, we want you to be aware of 4 things:
✓ First, this is a research study and participation is completely voluntary. We would like to hear from you, but there is no penalty for choosing not to take part.

✓ Second, it is important that you feel free to say what you really think. There are no right or wrong answers. All of your experiences and opinions are important.

✓ Third, with your agreement we are using an audio recorder so we can correctly capture all of your ideas. After our discussion today, the recording will be written down. Your answers will be combined with information from other participants and presented in written reports.

✓ Finally, the information will be used to help improve IRCO’s services to current and incoming Burmese refugees.

Do you have any questions before we start?
1. How long have you been in the U.S.?
   a. How long have you been living in Portland?
2. How many people live with you?
   a. How many generations live in the home?
    i. How many children and adults? Ages?
3. Which organizations have helped you settle into life in the U.S.?
   a. What role has each organization played in helping you settle?
4. What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced since arriving in the country?
5. Have you had any interactions with law enforcement or social services?
   a. If so, can you please describe them to me?
6. Did you face any difficulties when dealing with these groups?
7. What has been your experience dealing with the local schools?
8. Have your interactions with any of these organizations changed over the last ____ years?
   a. If so, why?
9. Have you heard about IRCO’s (Aung’s) parenting education classes?
   a. If so, how?
10. Have you talked with parents and caregivers that have attended Aung’s class?
11. Have they shared class information with you?
12. Has this information been useful?
   a. If so, how?
13. Do you have an interest in taking Aung’s parenting class?
   a. If so, why?

Wrap-Up
Thank interviewee for his/her time, ask if there is anything else he/she would like to add.
Appendix B

PARENT AND CAREGIVER (PROGRAM PARTICIPANT) INTERVIEW

We are here today as part of a research study aimed at understanding the experience of parents and caregivers who have participated in the parenting program offered through IRCO. You should have received a phone call or personal visit from an IRCO representative about the study, but just to review, we’re here to conduct an interview that will last between 30-45 minutes. My name is XXX and I will be asking you some questions today.

I will be asking for your insights about two general areas:

3. **Your experiences settling in the United States.**
4. **How the parenting class has helped with that process.**

As we proceed, we want you to be aware of 4 things:

- **First,** this is a research study and participation is completely voluntary. We would like to hear from you, but there is no penalty if you choose to not take part.

- **Second,** it is important that you feel free to say what you really think. There are no right or wrong answers. All of your experiences and opinions are important.

- **Third,** with your agreement we are using an audio recorder so we can correctly capture all of your ideas. After our discussion today, the recording will be written down. Your answers will be combined with the information we gain from other participants and presented in written reports.

- **Finally,** the information will be used to help improve IRCO’s services to current and incoming Burmese refugees.

Do you have any questions before we start?
1. How long have you been in the U.S.?
   a. How long have you been living in Portland?
2. How many people live with you?
   a. How many generations live in the home?
      i. How many children and adults? Ages?
3. Which organizations have helped you settle into life in the U.S.?
   a. What role has each organization played in helping you settle?
4. What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced since arriving in the country?
5. Have you had any interactions with law enforcement or social services?
   a. If so, can you please describe them to me?
6. Did you face any difficulties when dealing with these groups?
7. What has been your experience dealing with the local schools?
8. Since participating in Aung’s classes, have your interactions with these groups changed?
   a. If so, how?
      i. Law enforcement:
      ii. Social Services:
      iii. Schools:
9. How did you hear about Aung’s classes? How did you get involved with them?
10. Which members of this family attended Aung’s class?
11. How many times have they/you gone through the program?
12. What are you doing today as a parent or caregiver that you weren’t doing prior to the program?
13. Did the program meet your needs?
   a. What problems were addressed by this program?
   b. Which part/week/theme of the program was most beneficial to you?
14. Since graduating from the program, have you had the opportunity to share what you’ve learned with others in the community?
   a. Would you be willing to share our contact information with them to see if they would like to participate in this study?
15. Since participating in Aung’s classes, have your interactions with your children’s schools changed?
   a. If so, how?
16. How has Aung’s class helped you settle into life in the U.S., and how?
17. Were any parts of Aung’s class not helpful?
   a. Can you please elaborate?
18. Were there any topics that Aung did not cover, but you wish he had? What were these?

Wrap-Up
Thank interviewee for his/her time, ask if there is anything else he/she would like to add.
Appendix C

Verbal Consent Guide

Project Title: Parenting Education in Portland’s Burmese Refugee Community Principal Investigator: John Geldhof, Ph.D. Sponsor: Oregon Community Foundation

1. WHY IS THIS RESEARCH STUDY BEING DONE?
The purpose of this research study is to explore the utility of parenting education within Portland’s Burmese refugee population. We are especially interested in learning how parenting education can help parents and caregivers transition to the United States.

2. ACTIVITIES
You will participate in an interview that focuses on your experiences interacting with Portland’s Burmese refugee community.

3. AUDIO RECORDING
We will audio record today’s interview. If you do not want to be audio recorded, we will not go on with the interview.

4. TIME
The interview should take approximately 30-45 minutes.

5. RISKS
You may feel uncomfortable discussing interactions with Burmese Refugees. Please remember that we are not looking for identifiable information and you should maintain confidentiality of your interactions with these individuals. As with any study, there is also a risk that we could accidentally disclose information that identifies you.

6. VOLUNTARINESS
Participation in all parts of this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate in any part of the study you will not face any penalties and will not be treated differently.

7. CONFIDENTIALITY
Your name will not be given to anyone except members of the study team.

8. Mandatory Reporting
Under Oregon law, researchers are required to report to the appropriate authorities any information concerning child abuse or neglect. The researchers may also report threats of harm to self or others.
9. BENEFITS
We do not know if you will personally benefit from being in this study. However, this study has the potential to increase knowledge about ways to assist in the refugee acclimatization process and potentially provide relevant recommendations to any supporting organizations.

10. PAYMENT
You will be given a $25 gift card for taking part in this research study.

11. CONTACT INFORMATION
If you have any questions about this research project, please contact: John Geldhof, Ph.D. (email: john.geldhof@oregonstate.edu; telephone: 541-737-1149). If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a participant, please contact the Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office, at (541) 737-8008 or by email at IRB@oregonstate.edu.

12. SPONSOR
This research is supported by the Oregon Community Foundation

_________________________________________
Participant ID #

_________________________________________
Interviewer Name (please print)

_________________________________________
Interviewer Signature(Date)
Appendix D

Police Interview:

Section 1—General
1. What is your familiarity with the Burmese refugee community?
   a. Are you familiar with the different cultural subgroups living in the Portland area?
2. What types of calls have you typically received/responded to concerning the Burmese refugee community?
   a. How often?
   b. <if officer> Can you tell me a little more about what a typical response to one of these calls looks like? For instance, how do members of this community react when confronted by an authority figure?
   c. What role does the language barrier play in these interactions?
      i. How do you try to overcome that?
3. Are there certain neighborhoods where you respond to calls involving this community more often than others?
4. What is the rate of recidivism within families?
5. As a police officer, what are some of your biggest concerns about individuals in this community?
   a. How are these concerns currently being addressed?
   b. How effective do you think those efforts been?
6. In your opinion what are the needs of Burma’s refugee parents?
   a. How are these needs being met?
   b. What are some of the barriers to meeting these needs?
   c. What are some strategies to overcoming these barriers?

Section 2—Changes
Ok, now I want to change gears a little bit and discuss how your interactions with this community have evolved over time.
7. Over the last five years, have you seen any changes in the types and/or number of calls concerning members of this community?
   a. What are some of the factors that you think contributed to these changes?
8. Has the rate of recidivism changed during the last five years?
   a. Why do you think that is?
9. We are aware of three community organizations that work with the community: Catholic Charities, Lutheran Communities, and IRCO. Are you familiar with these organizations and, if so, what role do you think they have played in any changes?

Section 3—Aung’s classes
Through IRCO, Aung Moe has been offering parenting education and life skills classes.

10. How familiar are you with this program?

   a. <if familiar> What impact do you think these classes have had in terms of police involvement with this community?

      i. Can you tell me a little more about that?

11. Regardless of your familiarity, have you noticed changes in calls related to parenting, caregiving, and/or youth behavior over the last two years?

Wrap-Up
Thank interviewee for his/her time, ask if there is anything else he/she would like to add.

12. <for Precinct Chief only> Can you put us into contact with a few officers who have worked more specifically with this community?
Appendix E

School Administrator Interview:

Section 1—General

1. What is your familiarity with the Burmese refugee community?
   a. Are you familiar with the different cultural subgroups living in the Portland area?
   b. Approximately how many students from this community are enrolled in your school?
      i. How many are proficient in English?

2. How do students from this community perform academically?

3. Do students from this community display specific problem behaviors more often than other students?
   a. What are those behaviors?
   b. How often do they arise?
   c. What factors do you think lead to these behaviors?
      i. In particular, how do you think parents’ and caregivers’ behaviors contribute to these problems?

4. How do students from this community typically view/interact with authority figures?

5. What is the school’s level of interaction with parents and caregivers from this community?
   a. In general, how responsive are parents and caregivers from this community?
      i. Do you typically see a change in children from this community’s behaviors after you speak with their parents and caregivers?
   b. What role do you think the language barrier plays in your interactions with these parents and caregivers?

6. What are some of your biggest concerns about students from this community?
   a. How are these concerns currently being addressed?
   b. How effective do you think those efforts have been?

7. In your opinion what are the needs of Burma’s refugee parents?
a. How are these needs being met?
b. What are some of the barriers to meeting these needs?
c. What are some strategies to overcoming these barriers?

Section 2—Changes
Ok, now I want to change gears a little bit and discuss how your interactions with this community have evolved over time.

8. Over the last five years, have you seen any changes in children from this community’s academic performance and/or number of problem behaviors?
   a. What are some of the factors that you think contributed to these changes?

9. Have there been any changes in the way that children from this community respond to disciplinary actions?
   a. Clarify how and why

10. How have your interactions with parents and caregivers from this community changed over the last five years?
    a. Clarify how and why

11. We are aware of three community organizations that work with the community: Catholic Charities, Lutheran Communities, and IRCO. Are you familiar with these organizations and, if so, what is your level of interaction with them?

12. What role do you think these organizations have played in any of the changes that we just discussed?

Section 3—Aung’s classes
Through IRCO, Aung Moe has been offering parenting education and life skills classes.

13. How familiar are you with this program?
    a. <if familiar> What impact do you think these classes have had on parents’ and caregivers’ behaviors?
    b. <if familiar> What impact do you think these classes have had on children’s behaviors?

14. Regardless of your familiarity, have you noticed changes in either children’s or parents’/caregivers’ behaviors since over the last two years?

Wrap-Up
Thank interviewee for his/her time, ask if there is anything else he/she would like to add.
Appendix F

Social Services Providers

General

1. How long have you been involved with the Burmese refugee community?
2. What is your role/level of involvement with this community?
3. What is your role in terms of mediating between families and community services (police, schools, and social services)?
   a. How do language barriers impact these interactions?
   b. Do most refugees have a working knowledge of Burmese? How does this impact your interactions with them?
4. How did you get involved with this community?
5. Can you tell me a little bit about some of the biggest challenges parents and caregivers in this community face?
   a. What resources are currently available to help parents/caregivers face these challenges?
6. In your opinion what are the needs of Burma’s refugee parents?
   a. How are these needs being met?
   b. What are some of the barriers to meeting these needs?
   c. What are some strategies to overcoming these barriers?
7. Are there certain neighborhoods where you respond to calls involving this community more often than others?
8. How often do you need to visit families?
   a. Recidivism?
9. What are some of your biggest concerns about individuals in this community?
   a. How are these concerns currently being addressed?
   b. How effective do you think those efforts been?
10. How do most Burmese families access social services?
11. What role do children play as mediators between social services and their parents?

Section 2—Changes
Ok, now I want to change gears a little bit and discuss how your interactions with this community have evolved over time.
12. Over the last five years, have you seen any changes in the types and/or number of concerns surrounding youth and parents in this community?
   a. What are some of the factors that you think contributed to these changes?
13. We are aware of three community organizations that work with the community: Catholic Charities, Lutheran Communities, and IRCO. Are you familiar with these organizations and, do you know of any other organizations that work with this community?

a. In your experience, what services do these organizations typically provide?

b. What role do you think these organizations have played in any changes you have seen in the last five years?

Section 3—Aung’s classes
Through IRCO, Aung Moe has been offering parenting education and life skills classes.

1. How familiar are you with this program?

   a. <if familiar> What impact do you think these classes have had in terms of police involvement with this community?

      i. Can you tell me a little more about that?

2. Regardless of your familiarity, have you noticed changes in calls related to parenting, caregiving, and/or youth behavior over the last two years?

Wrap-Up
Thank interviewee for his/her time, ask if there is anything else he/she would like to add.
## Appendix G

### Itemized Social Service Provider Codes (Burmese Specific)

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## Appendix H

### Itemized Burmese Refugee Codes

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